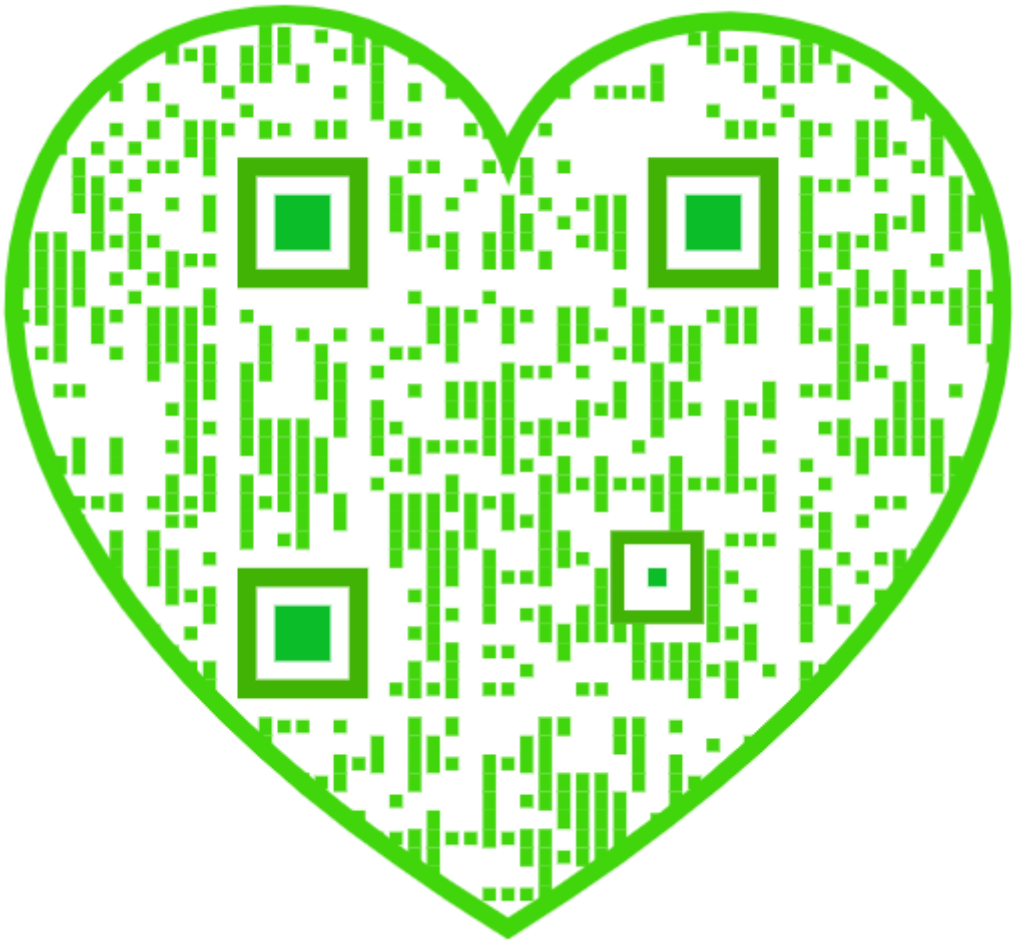

DEMOCRACY AND CHARACTER

The Moorhouse Lectures, 1908

DEMOCRACY AND CHARACTER

BY

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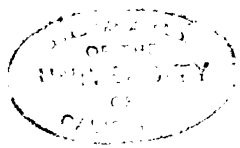

LONDON
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1908

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To

MY WIFE

189178

CONDITIONS OF THE LECTURESHIP

Extract from the Minutes of the Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne

MOORHOUSE LECTURESHIP

1. THIS lectureship shall be called the Moorhouse Lectureship, in memory of the Australian episcopate of the Right Rev. James Moorhouse, D.D., St John's College, Cambridge, Bishop of Melbourne 1876–1886.

2. The annual income of the lectureship shall be the interest upon a sum of £2000 held in trust by the Trusts Corporation of the Diocese of Melbourne for this purpose.

3. No lecturer shall hold the office more than twice, and at least ten years shall elapse between the first and second tenure. Anyone in Holy Orders in the Church of England at home or abroad, or in a church in communion with her, shall be eligible for election.

4. The electors shall be the bishops of the metropolitan sees of Australia and Tasmania and the Primate of New Zealand, and the Archbishop of Melbourne shall hold the office of Chairman.

5. The subjects of the lecture shall be (1) the defence and confirmation of the Christian faith as declared in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds; (2) questions bearing upon the history and authority of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and (3) the social aspects of the Christian faith in their widest application.

6. The lectures, not less than six in number, shall be delivered annually in St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, on such days as the Archbishop of Melbourne may approve. Each lecturer shall be required to publish his lectures in a form approved by the electors at his charges within six months of their delivery, and shall retain any copyright in them. He shall present a copy to each of the electors, and to every Diocesan Library in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand.

7. It shall be lawful for a majority of the electors to decide all questions arising out of the interpretation of these conditions.

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Democracy and Character

I

THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY

GENESIS i. 26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

MORE than fifty years ago De Tocqueville declared his belief in the irresistible progress of democracy. He dreaded its advance. He foresaw grave dangers and possible disaster. To use his own words:— "The whole book which is here offered to the public has been written under the impression of a kind of religious dread produced in the author's mind by the contemplation of so irresistible a revolution, which has advanced for centuries in spite of such amazing obstacles, and which is still proceeding in the midst of the ruins it has made.

". . . . The Christian nations of our age seem to me to present a most alarming spectacle; the im-

pulse which is bearing them along is so strong that it cannot be stopped, but it is not yet so rapid that it cannot be guided; their fate is in their hands; yet a little while and it may be so no longer" (*Democracy in America*: Introduction). But he was convinced that the tendency towards democracy was the most uniform, the most ancient and the most permanent tendency which is found in history. His conclusions have been questioned by many critics. He is said to have attached too much importance to causes which were merely local and temporary. The rapid development of American democracy and the ebullition of revolutionary feeling in Europe in the early part of the nineteenth century distorted his historical vision. He mistook the surge of a few waves for the rise of a resistless tide in human life. We are told also that democracy, as a form of government, can never be more than a transient phase. The system contains within itself the seeds of ruin; and pressure from hostile nations, or social discord, will bring them rapidly to maturity. The experience of the so-called democracies of Greece and medieval Italy leads to the same conclusion. The career of a State under a system of popular government may be brilliant, but it must be short, and the rule of the

people will inevitably be replaced by that of a dictator.

That may be so, but certainly the history of the half-century that followed seems to support De Tocqueville's judgment. In 1848 universal suffrage was established in France and Switzerland; in 1866, in Denmark; in 1871, in Germany. In 1873 the last property qualification was removed in the United States. In England the extension of the franchise has proceeded steadily. In her colonies, universal suffrage is the rule. In Austria, thanks to the statesmanship of her emperor, the victory of democracy is practically won. Even in Russia there are movements in the same direction; and Oriental nations such as Japan and Persia regard the extension of the franchise as one of the principles of Western civilisation which must be adopted by a progressive nation.

Whatever the future may have in store for us; whether democracy strengthens its grip on every civilised nation, or whether, as Lowell puts it, "we slink at last into the natural almshouse of bankrupt popular government, a military despotism," the fact remains that this is the day of triumph for popular government, and this generation, at least, is not likely to see its fall.

Yet, of all forms of government, democracy is, at first sight, the most absurd and impossible. To the mass of the people is entrusted the ultimate decision of all questions of public policy. These questions are, as a rule, complex in their nature. They require a knowledge of historical causes to explain their origin, and a knowledge of human nature to foresee their probable results. They involve an acquaintance with economic principles, if their material bearings are to be intelligible, and with ethics, if the decision is to be morally justified. Suppose, for example, such a simple question as that of a land tax is under consideration. Before we can form an opinion of any value, we must know something of the history of the landlord system in Anglo-Saxon communities. We must have some ideas as to the incidence of taxes, and understand that the burden of a tax is not always felt most heavily by the classes that pay it. We must recognise the existence and gauge the strength of the desire for landed property. We must consider delicate questions of morals, such as are involved in the social obligations of property owners or the rights of vested interests. All this implies knowledge and thought; and competent observers tell us that on such questions,

which, however simple they may seem, have deep roots in the past and complex ramifications in the present, the average voter is not qualified to express an opinion. His knowledge of human nature is limited. He is ignorant alike of history and economics, and shows no consuming desire to increase his information. Yet the national decision is arrived at by the simple process of counting heads, without considering what is inside them.

Then, again, the majority of people are lacking in self-control and unselfishness. They will make spasmodic efforts to secure their own good or that of their own class, but they are not likely to put aside their own interests in order to benefit other members of the community.

Add to this the fact, that the multitude is notoriously at the mercy of the demagogue. Its favourite leaders are the men who deceive their reason with sophistry, tickle their pride with flattery, and appeal to their self-interest by promises. And the final objection is, that the principle on which the franchise is granted is unreasonable. The only test is age. After twenty-one years of life every citizen is presumed to have powers, of the possession of which he may have given no evidence, and for the use of which

he may have made no preparation. He may be a scoundrel or an incapable; but we put him on the same level, politically, as the man who has cultivated his mind by study, and his character by self-restraint. As Amiel says, "We proclaim that a man becomes the equal of all other men by the mere mechanical and vegetative processes of natural growth."

As we consider all these objections—as we see that it is age, and not fitness to govern, that gives the right to govern; that difficult and complex questions are decided by mere majorities, and not by wisdom; that these majorities consist largely of ignorant and selfish men, blinded by prejudice, led by demagogues—does it not seem true that, of all forms of government devised by man, democracy is the most irrational?

Yet democracy has triumphed. Let us see, then, what is the essential element in democracy. What is the truth contained in it, which has enabled it to win the day in spite of its inherent difficulties and absurdities; and what is its relation to that which is, after all, the most important factor in human life, the character of men?

Democracy is merely a form of government, says Maine. That is true, but misleading. Forms are moulded by the spirit that inhabits them, and it is the

spirit that gives them value. It is true that democracy is a form of government, but it is based on principles, and principles which give it enduring vitality.

We may say at once that the first essential principle of democracy is a deep respect for human nature. Not only for the body, with its wonderful mechanisms and adaptations; but rather for the spirit which dwells within, with its faculties, its deathless aspirations, and its divine discontent, that refuses to be stilled by any earthly gift. The origin and the history of human nature are, from this point of view, of no importance. Science may tell us of our kinship with the lower animals, and ultimate derivation from the dust. The poet may sing to us that—

> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar."

The theologian may preach that we enter life with the stain and weakness due to ancestral sin. All this may be true. But whether it be true or not, there is enough in human nature to deserve respect. In each man there is not only a power of reason and imagination, but a character, with infinite possibilities

of good, with a capacity for responding to high ideals, with a power of forming a conception of duty and of struggling to obey, with a willingness to sacrifice his own wishes and his own material interests for the sake of his fellow-men. And all this belongs to man as man. It is the property of no one race or colour. It is independent of all distinctions of rank, or riches, or learning. All this wealth of possibility is shared by the humblest. His will may be as strong as that of any hero. His mind may be as active; if trained, it may be as effective as that of any philosopher. His character is capable of as much faithfulness to duty, as much sacrifice for an unselfish end, as that of any king or millionaire. His life, with its struggles and temptations, with its conflicts with external forces, may be as sublime or as pathetic as that of the greatest in history. There is, as Carlyle says, "the fifth act of a Tragedy in every deathbed, though it were a peasant's, and a bed of heath" (*Essay on Burns*).

Democracy, then, respects human nature for what it is and for what it may be; and even when possibilities are hindered and capacities crushed, pity and indignation are blended with a confident hope of better things to come. There can be no sympathy with the contemptuous feeling of Emerson, who

speaks of "lives not worth preserving," and of "guano races of mankind," fitted only to fertilise and to rot for the benefit of higher specimens. Barbarism and degradation emphasise the tragic contrast between failure and attainment, but they ought not to dim the vision of what shall be. The democratic spirit finds more true expression in the lines of Edwin Markham. He is looking at Millet's painful picture of the Man with the Hoe. A mere brutal clod stands there, fit only for the lowest work, hopeless, brainless, with a soul starved well-nigh to death.

"Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground.
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
To feel the passion of Eternity?
Is this the Dream He dreamed who shaped the suns
And pillared the blue firmament with light?
Down all the stretch of Hell to its last gulf

There is no shape more terrible than this—
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed—
More filled with signs and portents for the soul—
More fraught with menace to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!
Slave of the wheel of labour, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?
Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned, and disinherited,
Cries protest to the judges of the World,
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords, and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quenched?
How will you ever straighten up this shape;
Touch it again with immortality;
Give back the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?
O masters, lords, and rulers in all lands,
How will the Future reckon with this Man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb Terror shall reply to God
After the silence of the centuries?"

There is a fierce indignation flaming through these words, but it is tempered by the conviction that, after all, this being is a man, and therefore capable some day of a fuller life.

And this suggests to us a second element in the democratic spirit. If there are in man these potencies and capacities, the obvious duty of the human brotherhood is to make the most of them, and to give every man the chance to make the best of himself. Not to develop some men at the expense of others; not to allow one class to be depressed and brutalised so that another class may enjoy greater material comfort and higher culture; but to provide, as far as possible, that the powers inherent in each man may find full scope. Or, to adopt Kant's phrase, "to treat every man as an end in himself, and not as a means to an end." That is the spirit of democracy —respect for human nature, respect for man as man; and this must be the aim of democracy—to give to each man due consideration, as an end in himself.

But although this is the acknowledged principle of democracy, it is no complete justification of the methods of democracy. Granted that every man is worthy of respect and consideration, it does not follow that every man is fit to take part in the work of

government. Granted the capacity of every man for unselfish sacrifice and obedience to duty, there is no guarantee of wisdom, or even of actual goodness. The potential saint may be at present both a sinner and a fool; and it is a fact that the mass of men do not yet give evidence of any special fitness for the task of governing the State.

It is a fair objection, but we must remember that the errors, whether actual or predicted, ascribed to democracy, supply no conclusive argument against this form of government.

It is quite clear that the majority of men are lacking in knowledge, and intelligence, and self-control.

If they had had supreme power in the past, they would probably have made lamentable mistakes. Now that they have gained supreme power, they have already taken many false steps, and are likely to take many more in the future. One of the keenest critics of popular government is Sir Henry Maine, and some will remember how he expresses his distrust of the popular intelligence. "Let any competently instructed person turn over in his mind the great epochs of scientific invention and social change during the last two centuries, and consider what would have occurred if universal suffrage had been established at any one of

them. Universal suffrage, which to-day excludes free trade from the United States, would certainly have prohibited the spinning-jenny and the power-loom. It would certainly have forbidden the threshing-machine. It would have prevented the adoption of the Gregorian calendar; and it would have restored the Stuarts. It would have proscribed the Roman Catholics, with the mob which burned Lord Mansfield's house and library in 1780; and it would have proscribed the Dissenters, with the mob which burned Dr Priestley's house and library in 1791" (*Popular Government*, p. 35).

All this may be true, but to assert that democracy has made or will make mistakes leads only to the conclusion that the popular judgment is not infallible, and this we may admit at once. *Vox populi, vox Dei*, is a statement which, if not carefully limited, displays an ignorance of both history and theology. But is there any form of government which is infallible? Are there no mistakes to be charged against monarchies or aristocracies? Have the laws and institutions of the past always shown conspicuous wisdom, or an unselfish care for the weaker classes?

Compare Maine's story of what might have

happened in the eighteenth century under universal suffrage, with the record of the things that did happen under a less popular form of government. Consider the abuses which flourished without check, almost without protest. Political abuses, such as unequal representation, rotten boroughs, and unblushing bribery. Abuses connected with the law and its administration; which permitted a man, because he owed a trifling debt, to be immured for life in a pestilential prison; which had the one merit of shortening the life sentence; which affixed the death penalty to one hundred and sixty offences, many of them utterly trivial; which ordered that women should be publicly flogged, and that those who killed their husbands should be burned alive; which enforced barbarous and unjust penalties against Roman Catholics; which exercised a tyrannical censorship over the free expression of opinion. The list is too long for full quotation; and all this in England, where a greater measure of justice and liberty was to be found than in any Continental country. If we go further back, and trace the whole history of tyranny and injustice under kings or nobles or oligarchies, after making all allowance for general ignorance, we shall see that the worst results anticipated by the enemies of democracy are as the small

dust in the balance in comparison with the iniquities perpetrated under other systems.

Let us, then, admit at once that popular government is not perfect, and that the popular judgment is liable to error. But if so, how can democracy be justified in giving to every citizen a share in the government, without regard to his intelligence or fitness?

In order to answer this question, we must consider what it is that the citizen is called upon to do. There is a common misunderstanding as to the true function of the popular vote. It is obviously impossible for the people to carry on the work of government directly. We may put aside the exceptional case of a small Swiss canton, where the whole body of citizens can meet frequently in council and decide the details of public affairs. In modern times the city State, with its few inhabitants, and narrow bounds, and limited interests, has been replaced by the country State, with its millions of people, and its thousands of square miles of territory, and its complex relations with distant nations. Government by popular vote is out of the question. An executive is needed, with expert skill and promptness of action, and this must be secured by some method of representation. Here is one outstanding difference between modern de-

mocracies and those ancient forms to which the same name is given. The people no longer govern, but they choose their governors.

The first duty of the average citizen, then, is to make a wise choice of fit persons. Conscious as he may be of his own unfitness for the delicate work of legislation and administration, he has to select the few whom he judges to be sound in character and competent in ability. His duty is not to govern the State, but to see that the best and most capable men govern the State. As Professor Mackenzie puts it, "a real democracy must be aristocratic; it must aim at government by the best." Possibly in practice this aim is not always realised, but it is the avowed aim of the people to choose as their rulers those who are best fitted for the task—to choose an aristocracy in the true sense of the word. The second duty of the citizen is to sit in judgment on the actions of his rulers. During their term of office the officials have large powers of choice and action, and their decisions may flatly contradict the wishes of those who gave them power. But they are always confronted by a public opinion which finds candid and vigorous expression in newspapers and at public meetings, and which cannot be wholly disregarded. When the

time for re-election comes, the many-headed judge has to pronounce the final verdict of approval or condemnation. The question at once arises—what is this verdict worth? Is the multitude competent to judge the ruler? We attach little importance to the criticism that the man in the street passes on the expert lawyer or historian. Why should we suppose that the average voter is able to judge the expert politician? This brings us to the root of the matter.

The judgment that the elector pronounces on his rulers is, as a rule, a moral judgment. It is connected with character rather than with intellectual ability. The offender is rejected, not because he has committed a political or economic error, but because he has offended the elector's sense of justice. He has done something dishonest, or assented to unfair legislation, or refused to redress an inequality, or broken some solemn pledge. He is judged by the conscience, not by the mind of the people.

Even when the elector wishes to express his opinion on legislation, when he votes for measures rather than for men, it is generally a moral judgment that is uttered. The average man is not concerned with details or legal principles. But he wants to say whether a given law is consistent with his view of

righteousness and justice, and is fair to all classes; or whether it embodies a vicious principle, and presses in some directions with undue severity. The standard he applies is a moral standard.

In this way, whether consciously or unconsciously, he deals with the point of real importance to the laws and institutions of a State. In the case of an individual, folly is punished in this life more severely than sin. In the case of a nation, sin incurs the more severe penalty. A man suffers more for his mistakes than for his moral lapses, because the mills of God grind too slowly to produce their full effects in this life. We may see the beginnings of hardening of heart and impoverishment of character, but we must leave it to the future to disclose the full punishment of sin. But the life of a nation is longer and affords scope for retribution, and there we can see the full working of the moral law. The stability of a nation depends on the moral aims more than on the cleverness of statesmen. No amount of material wealth or military force can in the long-run compensate for the absence of justice and righteousness in home and foreign policy. The big battalions may conquer for a time, but they cannot permanently uphold aggression and tyranny, or injustice between class and

class. This may be considered as the clerical way of reading history. But listen to Froude, who cannot be accused of any clerical bias:—"What is the use of history, and what are its lessons? It is a voice for ever sounding across the centuries the laws of right and wrong. Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity. For every false word or unrighteous deed, for cruelty and oppression, for lust and vanity, the price has to be paid at last. Justice and truth alone endure and live. Injustice and falsehood may be long-lived, but doomsday comes at last to them in French Revolutions and other terrible ways." Or, if you prefer it, listen to Matthew Arnold. Or take Lecky's pregnant sentence,—"It is by observing the moral current that you can best cast the horoscope of a nation."

This, then, is the work of the voter under a system of popular government: Not to interfere directly with the work of administration or law-making, but to choose the best men for ruling, and to give approval to just laws; to see that the corporate action of the community is in accord with the eternal laws of right.

The average elector, then, is not supposed to be an expert in statesmanship, but simply an honest man,

aiming at righteousness in public life; and this view at once removes many of the objections urged against democracy. No doubt the day labourer or the station hand is not at present competent to undertake the duties of prime minister; nor could he give a judgment of much value as to the advantages of preferential trade or bimetallism; but he might have a very definite and a very true opinion as to the straightness and unselfishness of the man who wished to represent him in Parliament. And, on the great moral questions which underlie legislation, on questions of justice between man and man, and between class and class, his instincts are just as sound and his judgment just as likely to be right as those of the most intelligent and cultured person in the community.

In fact, I should go further and say that the judgments of the working classes are more likely to be sound than those of the educated. I do not mean, of course, that education unfits a man for the exercise of a sound judgment in matters social or political; but it so happens that the classes who have the best education are generally those who are most exposed to the influence of what Bentham calls "sinister interests." They have gained much in other ways

from society, they might lose much if the existing system were destroyed; and we are all tempted to think that system best which does most for our own comfort. A tenant-in-chief in feudal times or a successful merchant in the days of competition is not likely to be a very keen critic of the institutions which gave him his position. He will be more inclined to regard his world as the best of all possible worlds, and to resent any attempt at reconstruction as foolish, if not impious. We find in history ample support for the proposition that the judgment of the educated class is perverted by this unconscious bias. Froude reminds us, "In the sciences the philosopher leads; the rest of us take on trust what he tells us. The spiritual progress of mankind has followed the opposite course. Each forward step has been taken first among the people, and the last converts have been among the learned."

The same principle is found in operation in social reforms. During the last century, the educated classes have almost always been on the wrong side. They have consistently opposed measures which the conscience and common-sense of their successors admitted to be just. The inspiration has always come from the classes which had less learning, but

also less prejudice in favour of the established order of things, and less to lose by change.

Democracy, then, is justified in appealing to the multitude rather than to the few. The judgment required is not that of experts on details, but of honest men on principles. The appeal is made to the moral sense which all men possess rather than to the learning and knowledge which belong only to the cultured; and history supports us in the belief that the principles on which social reform is based find a lodgment in the hearts of the common people long before they are accepted by the educated classes. For years or centuries these fundamental social truths lie there, inarticulate and unexpressed, till some thinker puts them into words, and some champion translates them into action. We suppose the philosopher or the statesman has created them, but he has only moulded and uttered what the multitude has felt; and if we can get the judgment of the multitude, we shall get the clearest insight into the ultimate laws of human well-being.

I need hardly say that one condition must be fulfilled before the popular judgment is of much value. There must be time given for it to find itself.

Capricious, unreasoning, shifting, unreliable, are

the terms we apply to the vote of the people, and the terms are not inaccurate. But, as Abraham Lincoln was fond of saying, "You can fool some of the people for some time, but you cannot fool all the people for all time."

When a question comes before a nation for the first time, the majority are more likely to be wrong than right. The average man is slow to see all the bearings of a question, and slow to see the relation of an idea to the form by which it is expressed. He is liable to be led away by specious arguments which deal only with the surface of things, and so his first decision in matters political is likely to be erroneous. But give him time for reflection, time to see what the question really means, time to consider the ultimate as well as the immediate consequences of action, and, above all, time to gain a knowledge of all the relevant facts of the case, and his decision may be trusted. In these days there is no more hopeful sign in social life than the desire to act fairly and rightly which is exhibited by the bulk of the people. Take one set of cases by way of illustration. In the modern world, disputes between labourers and employers are unhappily too frequent. Many of these disputes involve complicated issues; in most it is very hard for the

public to get at the exact facts on which the dispute turns; and in every case, class interests and prejudices are likely to sway the judgment. But in the public mind there is a solid underlying determination to see justice done to every class; and when once the truth as to the dispute has emerged from the cloud of controversy, and the issues have been fully considered, public opinion may be trusted to give an equitable decision. So it is with much of our social legislation. It may be experimental; it may be full of flaws, and lead to unexpected results. But it is based on an honest attempt to do justice; and if we find persistent majorities supporting the principle at which this legislation is aiming, we may believe that the principle is sound, even though the attempts to express it may be defective. Lowell asserted of his own nation that "on all great questions of national policy a reserve of prudence and discretion has been brought out. An appeal to the reason of the people has never been known to fail in the long-run." Still more emphatically is this true of an appeal to the conscience of the people.

Democracy, then, is based on a deep respect for human nature, and in this it has the support of Christianity; or, to speak more accurately, this

respect is due to Christian teaching. For what has Christianity to say about human nature? First, that it was made in the image of God; that in human nature itself there is a reflection of the divine nature, something of the divine powers. It has a mind to think and plan, a will to act, a heart to love and sacrifice itself; and these are subject to that strange faculty, the conscience, through which the voice of God may speak. Here is enough to claim respect. The meanest and lowest of the sons of men is a son of God, with potencies in his nature which may develop into an ever closer likeness to his Creator. The slave, the savage, the degenerate, each retains a mind, a will, a heart, a conscience, which proclaim his divine parentage. As Carlyle puts it, "Through every living soul the glory of a present God still beams."

If the story of creation bids us respect man, our reverence for human nature is deepened by the story of Redemption. The Son of God chose to take our manhood and show us its possibilities and its value in His eyes; the manhood common to us all, not to a privileged few. We speak of inferior races, and lower classes, and degraded men; but every race, and every class, and every man, however low, has that same

human nature which Christ wore on earth, and now wears in heaven. In the earthly life of Him who took our manhood we see the possibilities of humanity. In that resistance of temptation, in that endurance of suffering, in that devotion to the highest, in that obedience even unto death, we learn what man can do. We also see what the Son of God thought of human nature. He knew what was in man, all his sin and failure, all his weakness and pettiness, his inconsistencies and his shame; yet, knowing all this, He thought it worth while to die for man. Human nature may have been deeply scarred and stained, but it was not ruined.

The story of Redemption finds its sequel in the promise of the future. Each man appears on the stage for his tragic conflict with circumstance and heredity; and for each man, whatever his natural gifts or social position, there is precisely the same prize of victory. Each is offered an eternal life, with all stain and weakness removed, with all faculties raised to their highest perfection, with character moulded into the likeness of the Perfect Man.

Now, when we consider the Christian conception of man, made in God's image, with God-like attributes still persisting in him; honoured by God Himself

with so real an honour that, fallen as he was, he could not be allowed to perish; the object of a love so deep that the joy of redeeming him made even the Cross endurable; with a destiny that transcends the powers of human thought and reaches into eternity; and when we remember that all this is not the exclusive privilege of heroes, or scholars, or saints, but pertains to man as a human being, we cannot wonder that political thought has at last come to the same conclusion, and teaches as established truth the native dignity of man.

This suggests to us another article in the popular creed. We have seen that democracy involves a generous trust in human nature, a belief that the average man has it in him to aim at justice and righteousness in social life. But it involves an equally generous trust in man's capacity for improvement. Granted that at any moment the average man is unfitted for the high functions thrust upon him, there is no reason why he should remain unfit. Rousseau tells us of the perfectibility of man, and this is not the only Christian truth uttered by that very unchristian teacher. It is one of the fundamental doctrines of our faith that in every man, however imperfect and rudimentary his present state may be,

there are latent capacities, boundless possibilities. The whole history of the Church is the story of the application of this truth. We see it in operation on the grand scale as Christianity deals with national character, supplying what is lacking and strengthening what is good; as it gives stability and seriousness of purpose to the Greek, and softens the harshness of the Roman, and brings the untamed Northern tribes into subjection to the yoke of Christ. We see it in every sinner whose heart Christ has touched and whose life Christ has purified; in every Christian saint who has begun in weakness and grown to strength; in every Christian man who finds the grace of God within him, giving him strength to resist temptation and patience to endure suffering. It is a postulate of Christianity that man can be improved. If this is true in fact, we must not shrink from applying it to our politics. The average citizen may be of very unsatisfactory type, without great intelligence, liable to be misled by prejudice and passion, the victim of deep-seated moral weakness. But he is not so dull that he cannot learn by his mistakes; his moral standards are not so low that they cannot be improved. When we are told of the necessary failure of the people to choose and decide rightly, we may

well ask, with Ruskin, "Who are these people? Are they of a race essentially different from ours, and unredeemable; or are they men like ourselves, capable of indefinite improvement?"[1]

Democracy, then, assumes that the average citizen is worth improving and is capable of improvement; and it proceeds to make him a better citizen by imposing on him political duties and responsibilities. He will probably make mistakes, and possibly the government of the country will be inefficient in parts. But the political education of the man is more important than the perfection of details of administration, and his education can only be attained through action. But notice carefully, for this point is vital, what exactly are the duties involved. It is generally supposed that democracy is a scheme by which each

[1] "In all the ranges of human thought, I know none so melancholy as the speculations of political economists on the population question. It is proposed to better the condition of the labourer by giving him higher wages. 'Nay,' says the economist; 'if you raise his wages, he will either people down to the same point of misery at which you found him, or drink your wages away. . . .' Either these poor are of a race essentially different from ours and unredeemable (which, however often implied, I have heard none yet openly say), or else, by such care as we have ourselves received, we may make them continent and sober as ourselves—wise and dispassionate as we are—models arduous of imitation."—*Unto This Last.*

man or each class is made the guardian of individual or class interests. No section of the community, according to this view, is unselfish enough, or has a sufficiently sympathetic understanding of another's position, to be trusted to care for any well-being but its own. The rich cannot be trusted to be just to the poor; the labourer will not be just to the employing class, or the employer to the labourer. The only remedy is to give to each section the power to look after itself, and thus secure universal justice. But this reduces political life to a painfully low level. Such a view may be suggested by the course of history, and the successive extensions of the franchise may be regarded as the gift to one class after another of the right to fight for its own hand. But this cannot be the final interpretation of a great social movement. The ideal system towards which history is tending cannot be built upon persistent selfishness. The true principle of popular government is far higher. Instead of making each man the guardian of his own interests, it tells him to serve the State. Instead of making him a mere partner in a common enterprise, with a view to his own profits, it makes him a trustee of national interests. He is to think first of the State, then of himself; first of his duties as a citizen, then of

his rights as an individual. Each man is given a share in government, so that he may exercise his rights for the good of all. He is to look beyond his own life and his own needs, and to consider what is best for those outside his little circle.

This is the great merit of democracy, that it puts before its citizens a high ideal of political duty, one which appeals to the nobler elements of character, and calls them to breadth of outlook and unselfish action.

It may seem a small thing to a man that he should have a vote. The course of history will not be altered if he uses it. The State will probably survive and prosper even if he neglects to use it. But it may mean, and ought to mean, a great deal to him. It is a recognition by his fellow-men of his manhood, that is, of his capacity to do his duty and to contribute to the common good. They see the best in him and they trust the best in him. If he feels his unfitness for the responsibility thrust upon him, it is a reminder that he may make himself more fit. It is an appeal to the conscience, for he must judge men and laws by a moral standard. He must say what he believes to be right or wrong in human life. It is an appeal to his sympathies, for he must try to enter into the lives and needs of others, and secure

what is best for them, even though he may lose or suffer by his action. It is a call to rise above the petty aims of a self-seeking life, and to take some share, however humble, in shaping the destinies of a people.

It is a call to play a man's part in the world.

II

THE NEED OF INDEPENDENCE

GAL. vi. 5: "Every man shall bear his own burden."

WE have often been reminded that the idea of the individual is of recent growth. In former times men were not regarded singly, but as parts of a group. Their independence, their possession of a separate life and of separate rights, had no place in the thought of the ancient world. "Society in primitive times was not what it is assumed to be at present, a collection of individuals. In fact, and in the view of the men who composed it, it was an aggregate of families. . . . One peculiarity always distinguished the infancy of society. Men are regarded and treated, not as individuals, but always as members of a particular group. . . . . The family relation was the narrowest and most personal relation in which a man stood; nor, paradoxical as it may seem, was he ever regarded as

himself, as a distinct individual" (Maine, *Ancient Law*, pp. 126, 183).

Then, from various causes and by slow degrees, the idea of individuality asserts itself; a man is thought of and treated as a distinct person; living as a member of a group, but with a separate existence and with personal rights, even as against the group of which he forms a part. Roman law, with its conception of private property, and the Teutonic idea of personal allegiance to a chief rather than to the State, worked in the same direction; but it was Christianity, with its teaching of the worth of a single soul, of the infinite love bestowed on it, of the eternal destiny awaiting it, that fixed this conception firmly in the thought and practice of the Western world, so firmly that it would seem to have become a permanent possession of the race. This is the dominant thought of the Middle Ages, so far as they were animated by the Christian spirit. As Gierke says, "In sharp contrast to the theory of antiquity runs through the Middle Ages the thought of the absolute and undying value of the individual, revealed by Christianity, and grasped in all its depths by the Teutonic spirit. Every individual, in virtue of his eternal destination, is, at core, something holy and indestructible. The

smallest fraction of the whole has its own intrinsic worth, not merely because it is a part of the whole."

Even in the Middle Ages, however, there were signs of revolt; and in the *Prince* of Machiavelli we find a complete disregard of the rights of individual citizens; the security and efficiency of the ruling power are alone to be considered. In the *Leviathan* of Hobbes, the rights and powers of the State, as against its members, are absolute. In the French Revolution, with all its boasts of the rights of man, we see no attempt to secure, or even to consider, those rights. The individual had been the slave of the royal power; now he is to be the slave of a new power, falsely called the popular will. The slavery may not be so galling, but it is to be equally complete.

At the present day we see an astonishing number of forces at work, tending in the same direction. First of all there is the influence of biological science. It has become the fashion to treat sociology as a branch of biology. Society is described as an organism, and the terms and laws which apply to lower creatures are transferred, often without modification, to social life. It is forgotten that we are dealing with analogies, not with identity. It is also forgotten that even if society were really an organism

in the biological sense of the word, there is much in it that is new and utterly strange to the lower forms. We have no right to suppose that the principles which govern the life of jelly-fish or ants are the best for guiding the modern State. The fact, however, remains that there is a tendency to exaggerate the likeness, and to forget the differences between the sub-human and the social organisms.

Now, in biology the individual cell or animal counts for nothing. It is merely a means to an end. If it contribute to the success of the type, it may live; otherwise it is crushed or starved out of existence. For those who study social science only by the red light of biology, the conclusion seems to follow, that human beings also must be considered as means to an end. If they contribute towards the perfection of the race in some distant age, they may be allowed to develop, but in themselves they have no right to live or move.

Then, if we turn to politics, the importance of the individual is again assailed. We are told that we have exaggerated the influence of his conduct and his judgment, and that it really counts for very little in the course of history. Stress is laid on the increasing size of nations and constituencies. Not merely are populations growing in numbers, but political powers

and duties are more widely distributed. In a small tribe each man may count for something. In a nation governed by a small class, each member of the governing class may be of importance. But if millions of citizens have a share in political power, the power belonging to each becomes so minute that his responsibility for its use reaches the vanishing point; and a large proportion of our citizens are subject to a kind of moral paralysis induced by the excessive subdivision of power and responsibility.

We have then a doubt as to our importance, raised by the thought that there are vast numbers of persons of equal importance; and this is strengthened by certain features of our modern political life. Under the party system, the independence of the voter is necessarily curbed. In order to secure the triumph of his convictions on one point, he is forced to suppress his convictions on other points. He has to assent to men and measures he does not like, lest a worse thing befall him by the victory of those which he detests. Having chosen his party, he is told that he must choose between the position of a faithful slave or a traitor.

There is, however, something to be said on the other side. The party system often gives an increased

value to the individual. If parties are equally balanced, it is the few independent voters who turn the scale, and this fact attaches an importance to their judgment which may be far beyond its intrinsic worth. Both parties try to court these men; it is to their wishes that concessions are freely made. The obedient sheep on either side follow where they may be led, but the sturdy few dictate policies. Here lies their great opportunity. If they maintain a high standard, and refuse to consent to immoral methods and projects, they force the party leaders who are bidding for their votes to keep their own standards high. Merely as individuals they might be disregarded; but as independent voters whose support must be secured, their character and judgment have an exaggerated influence on the tone of public life.

There is a more subtle attack on the importance of the individual made from the side of psychology. Long ago it was observed that men were influenced by forces which they imperfectly understood and were unable to rule. The spirit of the age is the master even of those who think they guide it, and it leads them by unexpected paths to ends of which they never dreamed. As Carlyle tells us in his *French Revolution*, "No party, no leader, really knew

the goal of the movement." Some of the most picturesque effects in all his writings are those in which he loves to describe how even intellectual leaders in the very hour of their fancied enlightenment are being precipitated towards ends they wot not of. Was it not so with the French salons before the Revolution, in love with new ideas, and all unconscious of the blood-boltered Nemesis that was lying in ambush for them? Was it not so with the revolutionary leaders, filled with the latest lights of Encyclopædism, and so soon to be devoured by the spectre of Anarchy which they had themselves unchained? Was it not so with the French noblesse, who scoffed at the theories of "The Social Contract," and whose "skins were used to bind the second edition of that work"? (MacCunn, *Six Radical Thinkers*, p. 150). Take any great movement in history: the Renaissance; the Reformation; modern Socialism. It represents ideas and forces which none of those involved can express or understand, much less control. We may read all the leaders say about their aims, and hopes, and efforts, and yet we recognise the operation of a force which is independent of these efforts, not always in harmony with these aspirations, but irresistible in its onward sweep.

In our days this doctrine of an unknown force and its power in the great tides of human history becomes allied to the more definite doctrine of the unconscious or the sub-conscious in the individual. The greater part of the mind is said to be in an unconscious state. We are able to recognise certain mental operations performed in a state of consciousness. The waves of psychic life rise at times over the threshold; we can notice their form and behaviour, and to some extent they are under our control; but they come from a silent sea of which we have no further knowledge. We are all acquainted with certain forms of unconscious cerebration. A problem has defied us for days. We put it aside, and the solution comes suddenly and unexpectedly. It has been worked out in the depths below our consciousness. A name or a date that we have striven in vain to remember is recalled a few days later without effort. A new idea or a new arrangement of old ideas comes to us unsought as a gift from the unseen. These are familiar facts, and they are supported by many others known to psychologists, and leading to the same conclusion. The mind of which we are conscious is only a small portion of the mind which belongs to us, and the unknown remainder is of

greater importance than we suppose. Through the unconscious may come religious or poetic inspiration, the impulse to noble deeds or thoughts, or, possibly, the temptation to crimes which we think are alien to our nature. Through the unconscious we are brought into closer contact with other minds, and it may be with the universal mind. In this hidden sphere the forces which make our lives are ceaselessly at work. Memory and will and character are being fashioned and guided in the unseen.

Now, whatever we may think of these speculations, they are likely to have a disturbing effect. They lead us to revise our estimates of the value and responsibility of individuals. Probably a fuller knowledge will restore the old conception both of value and responsibility, but we begin to think less of ourselves and of our importance when we are confidently assured that our true selves are below the threshold of consciousness, and that unknown factors are at work in the development of mind and character.

In close connection with the foregoing comes another modern attack on our belief in our own importance. We are told that as soon as we become members of a crowd, or of a group animated by

common interests or a common purpose, we lose the power of expressing our real selves. A crowd is subject to psychological laws of its own, and they differ from the laws regulating individual life. A collective mind and will are formed, not by striking an average, but by a chemical combination which produces new qualities.

On the intellectual side, the member of a crowd at once divests himself of his distinctive characteristics. He may be cultured, intelligent, reasonable, but he falls to the level of the least intelligent of his neighbours. Le Bon puts it somewhat strongly:— "The decisions affecting matters of general interest come to by men of distinction, but specialists in different walks of life, are not sensibly superior to the decisions that would be adopted by a gathering of imbeciles. The truth is, they can only bring to bear in common on the work in hand those mediocre qualities which are the birthright of every average individual. In crowds, it is stupidity and not mother-wit that is accumulated" (*The Crowd*, p. 32). Then again, to a crowd, imagination is a stronger force than argument. It will be taken captive by the prestige of its leaders, by a telling phrase, by a popular sentiment, by a word-picture, by emphatic declarations and

reiterations. There is nothing surprising in the statement that the mob at Ephesus shouted for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," but the town-clerk must have been a popular favourite to secure even a hearing for his arguments. On the moral side, the individual loses the guidance of his own will and character. He is hypnotised and exposed to the influence of any predominant idea, and then the influence of contagion multiplies the force of the suggestion. He may rise above or fall below himself. He may give his life for his neighbour, or, with equal readiness, take his neighbour's life. He may rush impetuously to a crusade or a massacre. But what he does is not the product of his previous training, nor would it be ratified by his calmer judgment.

We are offered a somewhat pitiful picture of a man throwing aside the results of years of intellectual culture and moral discipline, reverting to primitive passions and instincts which he can obey, but cannot guide; and our distress is deepened as we remember that through the conditions of our modern life we are being brought into closer contact with increasing numbers of our fellow-men. We cannot help being members of crowds, whether the controlling and unifying purpose be political, social, or economic, and

we must be exposed to this mysterious influence of the crowd, which is said to be beyond our powers of resistance. Truly there is not much to encourage us in the belief that our judgment counts for anything in the national life. When we think of the millions of other persons, we conclude that one person is a negligible quantity. If this does not deter us from recording our vote, we are told that we are bound to vote for our party, even though we may disagree with it on the point at issue. Then we are dismayed by the reflection that our vote and our action do not represent our real selves, but are the result of forces of which we are not conscious, and of suggestions which we should resist if we were alone, but which control us when we are in union with our neighbours. We feel the truth of Emerson's saying, that "society is everywhere in a conspiracy against the manhood of its members."

But we are warned that there are yet worse things in store for us. What if Socialism were completely established? Would this mean the introduction of a social despotism which would stifle conscience and be fatal to individual liberty? There are many prophets who proclaim that a socialistic régime would imply an era of slavery. Liberty of action would disappear.

Service for the State would become compulsory, and, by being compulsory, would lose all moral value. As the subordination of the individual to the State became more complete, the life of the citizen would become a series of compliances with public demands which he could not resist. Conscience would have no scope in a life controlled from without, and with the decay of conscience all that gives real value to the individual would be lost. It may be admitted at once that Socialism, whether partial or complete, involves certain restrictions on individual liberty, but it by no means follows that the sum of liberty is thereby decreased. A father can no longer put his child to death, but, though his liberty of action has been checked, the limitation has increased the freedom of society. No modern inquisition can use the torture-chamber, but this limitation of ecclesiastical liberty has made the world more free. The owner of a fast horse or motor car is not permitted to drive at speed in a crowded street, but the mass of the people have the opportunity to spend more time on their business and less on providing for their safety. Numberless instances may be quoted showing that the restriction of liberty in certain cases does not necessarily mean the lessening of liberty on

the whole. The real object of such restrictions is to prevent some men doing what is pernicious to society, so that others may have more opportunity to do what is useful. On the whole, this object is being attained. The life of the civilised man is hemmed in by a network of restrictions, and yet he is infinitely more free to live and act in a useful way than were his ancestors, who had no fear of by-laws before their eyes. Nor is there any reason to suppose that under Socialism this process of curtailing harmful freedom and increasing the liberty of useful action will be reversed. Mistakes will still be made; legislation will not produce exactly the results at which it aimed. In unexpected quarters, new rules will press with unforeseen severity. But why should we assume that our successors are to be less honest and less sensible than ourselves? Their legislation will aim at the general well-being with the same sincerity of purpose as our own. They will fall into error just as we do, but they will show as much readiness to profit by experience and to correct mistakes as we can display.

But in Socialism there does lurk a danger of another kind. There would be a tendency to lessen the value of the individual, not because he would be under greater pressure of compulsion, and therefore less free

to control his life, but because the compulsion would come from one power instead of many.

Under the present system, the ordinary man, though nominally free, is swayed by a variety of impulses which practically imply compulsion. In theory, the worker is free to choose his work, and to work when and where he likes. He can be idle or industrious, work under this master or that. He can roam through the world and let his wishes be his law. In reality this freedom is illusory. The fear of starvation prevents him from being idle. The want of money hinders him from moving to another town. The difficulty of getting employment leads him to take the first position offered, and to keep it even though it be uncongenial. The same cause impels him to do what his employer may dictate, however much against the grain. Behind these, there are other indirect compulsions. The wage system is too fixed and rigid for him to escape from it. Fashion and custom are too imperious for their dictates to be defied. The chance of making a fortune is so alluring that inclination, and sometimes character, yield before its persuasions. Although our social system professes to leave us free, the social forces in operation limit our freedom on every side. But the point to be noticed is,

that these forces are varied in their nature and their origin. Sometimes we groan under the demands of a system; sometimes under those of an employer; sometimes we suffer from the rule of authority; sometimes from the habits of a group of consumers; sometimes from the fear of poverty or the hope of riches. The pressure comes from different quarters.

Now, we need not suppose that under Socialism the burden on the individual would be greater. The avowed object of the new scheme is to relieve this strangling, crushing pressure which lowers hope and energy and ruins life; and if it were successfully established, each member of the State would have a lighter load to bear. But though the pressure would be less, it would come almost entirely from one direction. It would always be connected with the authority of the State. The decision as to where and how we should work would come from the State. The reward for our work would be fixed by the State. The tyranny of fashion would be largely replaced by the verdict of committees to supervise production, appointed by the State. The possibilities of starvation or of comparative wealth would depend on the judgment of the State. Thus the citizen, who is now ruled by many tyrannical powers, would find himself

the subject of one sovereign. The ruler would be less tyrannical, but more powerful. The citizen would be a part of the State, and so have a voice in the control of his own life, but he would be a very minute part, and have but little influence. There can be no doubt that as the State exercises more and more of its controlling power, and increases the area of life over which this power is felt, each member will realise more acutely than ever his own relative insignificance.

The tide of modern life is thus setting strongly against the individual and in favour of society; and although, in the case of most men, to gain a conviction of their own unimportance might seem a salutary process, yet there are grave social dangers involved. In the first place, the society may misuse its strength. The possession of power is always a temptation to tyranny, and the temptation is stronger for a majority than for a single ruler. The history of persecution in the past, whether religious, or political, or social, is sufficient illustration. Even in these days of tolerance, when we suppose the battle for liberty has been fought and won, there are disquieting symptoms. If we are convinced that this is the age of freedom, we might test our conviction by sharing in a caucus

in politics, and trying to reserve the right of private judgment. Or we might become members of the Employers' Federation, or of the Trades Hall Council, and exercise our undoubted right to think and act for ourselves. Or we might publish a searching but adverse criticism of the spirit and habits of the community, and then wait for the gratitude due to the faithful friend. Or we might take the unpopular side at a public meeting, and afterwards consider whether the principles of liberty were as widely held or as firmly rooted as we had hoped. In these days, as in the past, there is a persistent temptation for majorities to abuse their power and to become intolerant; and to yield to this temptation must mean social disaster.

The character of a tyrant becomes corrupted by his misuse of power; and though the tyrant be many-headed, the effect on character will be the same. Humility, sympathy, the sense of justice, are easily driven from the heart of the sovereign people, and there is not even the fear of tyrannicide to teach it clemency.

In other ways, the intolerance of a majority is ruinous to the best life of a State. In his classical work on *Liberty*, John Stuart Mill has pointed

out the evils that accompany the repression of individuality. Every one should live out his own life, partly for his own sake, partly for the sake of society. For his own sake, because the man who chooses his own plan of life must use not only "the ape-like faculty of imitation," but all his faculties; and by the use of his faculties he develops them to the uttermost, and so makes the best of himself. Nor is it only for his own sake that he should be allowed to choose for himself. If the national life is to be preserved from stagnation, if it is to become "rich, diversified, animating," it must give scope to originality. The man of genius has his special gift to contribute to his fellows, but if no allowance is made for his eccentricity, if he is compressed into the customary mould, his genius fails to find expression and the nation is the poorer. Even with less striking personalities, freedom of development is essential. The fullest life of the nation and the capacity for progress cannot be preserved if there is no variety of environment, in which a healthy variety of minds and characters may be nurtured. If custom or public opinion steadily represses individuality, the fate of the unchanging East will fall upon the Western nations.

Here, then, is one of the perils of our day.

Majorities may become more intolerant and more tyrannical, and so not only harden their own hearts, but repress the variety and richness of the life of the State. The tendency of prosperous democracies to conceit and self-sufficiency makes the danger greater. The majority in every community is composed of men who are mediocre in ability and character, and they are likely to be so well satisfied with their mediocrity and its results that they resent any striking superiority. Conduct wiser than their own, principles higher, insight more profound, thoughts which they cannot follow, form a silent but irritating reproach, and public opinion makes its protest by frowns or jeers. In spite of Grote's defence, the ostracism of Aristides remains a warning for all time.

The main hope of the future lies in the sturdy independence of the citizen, who claims for himself, and will therefore be more ready to allow to others, the right to speak and act as conscience may decide. Mill tells us that the chief danger of the time is that so few dare to be eccentric. Perhaps his statement is defective. In itself eccentricity is of no value. It would be more true to say that the chief danger of the time is that so few dare to be independent.

For this represents the form in which the true

manhood of the future will show itself. In earlier days, courage was tested in the struggle with nature, on the field of battle, in the endurance of physical pain; and we still need men who can face hunger, and torture, and death without flinching. To-day we are beginning to see that heroism has still harder conflicts before it, and the field where it will be tested is the market-place, the committee-room, and the public meeting. The man who follows the crowd to do evil, the man who agrees to the resolution of a committee because his scruples might seem fantastic, the politician who always keeps his ear to the ground, the citizen who can be trusted to take the popular side, these are the cowards and traitors of the new era. The strong man of the future is he who can say the right and do the right in defiance of majorities, and evil custom, and public opinion. The right of the majority to decide on a course of action does not prove that the majority is right in its decision. At first, probably, it is wrong; and it can only be brought to the side of what is right by the faithful opposition of the minority. This is the burden that Democracy lays upon us. The destinies of the nation are entrusted to the whole people. Each man has his part to play, but it must be a brave and honest part. Each must

contribute his best, that is, his true self, to the nation's life, and to do this he must have no fear of the face of man. He may fail to convince, he may be outvoted, hooted down; but, even so, his deed and word survive and help to save the race. He will adopt the spirit of Washington's words at the opening of the Federal Convention: "It is too probable that no plan we propose will be adopted. Perhaps another dreadful conflict is to be sustained. If, to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. The event is in the hands of God."

"Superb moral courage is the crying need of a democracy." But this independence, this moral courage, will not be shown by the man who doubts the importance of his life and the value of his judgment. Tell him the State is supreme, and the individual counts for nothing; that the great process of evolution aims only at the future perfection of the race, and that, in itself, the single life is valueless; that he is the sport of irresistible forces, and that, when he mingles with his fellows, he cannot help surrendering his distinctive gifts and falling to the level of the average; impress upon him the fact that

he is insignificant and unimportant, and you are not likely to get strenuous effort or a hero's independence.

But there is another kind of teaching, more true and more fruitful. Lay greater emphasis on each man's relation to God. This great force which stands behind our life and moulds it and directs it; which sometimes remains unknown, felt but not understood; which wells up at times into consciousness from some hidden reservoir of energy—what is it, after all?

A fire mist and a planet,
  A crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
  And caves where the cavemen dwell.
Then a sense of law and beauty,
  And a face turned from the clod—
Some call it Evolution,
  And others call it God.

A haze on the far horizon,
  The infinite, tender sky,
The ripe, rich tints of the cornfields,
  And the wild geese sailing high.
And all over upland and lowland,
  The charm of the golden rod—
Some of us call it Autumn,
  And others call it God.

Like the tide on a crescent sea-beach,
  When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
  Come welling and surging in—

Come from the mystic ocean,
  Whose rim no foot has trod—
Some of us call it Longing,
  And others call it God.

A picket frozen on duty,
  A mother starved for her brood,
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
  And Jesus on the rood;
The million who, humble and nameless,
  The straight, hard pathway trod—
Some call it Consecration,
  And others call it God.

By what name, then, shall we call this spiritual force which is behind and through all nature? Call it God, and the meaning and potency of human life become transfigured. Each man becomes a channel of the divine, a partial expression of the universal Word. The thoughts and impulses which come to him from the unknown are God's inspiration. The social ideals that beckon him onwards, the institutions that he founds and improves, are the work of that spiritual force which moulds secular affairs. So each man comes to recognise himself as an instrument or agent through whom God's will is to be done. With this faith he can face all the modern tendencies to weak-kneed compliance. His single life may seem of trifling importance compared with the vast

numbers of his fellow-men; but his life is part of the divine life, and is therefore of infinite value in itself, and demands respect from the most overwhelming majority. The future of the race may seem to be the goal of evolution, but it is also God's purpose that the individual should be brought to perfection. He may know himself to be in the grip of irresistible force, but that force is God, who wishes to use him. He may feel the influence of the crowd, but he can struggle against it in the strength of a divine inspiration. He can be independent of earth, just because he is dependent on heaven. If he gives way through fear of human tyranny or love of human praise, he is traitor to the Supreme power.

Our social life can only be healthy when majorities learn to be tolerant, and minorities learn to be independent. But tolerance and independence alike spring from the belief that each man is a son of God, with a paramount obligation imposed upon him, which none of his brethren have a right to gainsay—the obligation of doing what conscience bids him, and of uttering fearlessly the highest truth he sees.

III

PUBLIC SERVICE

Acts xx. 35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

In the course of the discussions which raged round the earlier extensions of the franchise, many remarkable predictions were made. Some spoke of the golden age; some of anarchy and ruin. But no one ventured on the prophecy that amongst the laws proposed by Democracy would be one compelling citizens to vote at elections. To the leaders of reform it would have seemed incredible that hardly-won privileges should be soon despised, and that a large proportion of the people should show so little interest in their rulers or their laws. And those who spoke warmly and strongly on the fitness of the people to govern themselves would have been surprised to find such a glaring neglect of the first principles of public duty. Yet it is unfortunately true that one of the pressing dangers of democratic states lies in the

unwillingness of the citizens to discharge the simple duties connected with their privileges. In America, Mr Bryce tells us, the best life and energy of the nation flow habitually apart from politics. In Australia there is a growing disinclination amongst the best men to become candidates for parliament, or to take an active part in the organisation of elections. As regards voting, it is difficult, under ordinary circumstances, to bring electors to the poll; and even in times of moral or political crisis, when a strong appeal is made to every public-spirited citizen, the number that refuses to vote remains disgracefully large. Barely fifty per cent. on the average may be counted upon to do their duty. Probably in municipal elections the average is even less.

For this aversion from public life and service there are many reasons. For one thing, the ordinary business of life is becoming daily more complex and claims more attention. There are not many who can be content to follow a simple routine. New developments, new discoveries, new methods, changes in the markets—all these have to be understood and reckoned with if the employer or worker is not to find himself distanced by a more alert competitor; and the necessary study of the conditions of industry

means a tax on time and energy. Then, again, life outside working hours is becoming more interesting. Education has unlocked the gates of knowledge. Newspapers and cheap books have brought to every class some acquaintance with the history and literature of the past, the events and discoveries of the present, the dreams and hopes of a future age. The passion for amusement is universal; and while fully recognising the value to life of recreation, or, to go further, while acknowledging the absolute necessity of recreation for a fully developed life, we must confess that amusement takes too prominent a place in our scheme of living. The ordinary man has, for these reasons, more to do and more to think about than was the case in the past, and it is not surprising that he is less willing to devote his powers to matters which do not always seem to have direct bearing on his life.

As a second cause of neglect might be mentioned the indifference which comes from prosperity and success. The men who have much to gain by legislation show an enthusiasm which tends to disappear when their own success leaves them free for unselfish action.

Too often the reason is found in laziness or hope-

lessness. Mr Bryce tells us that the American business man finds it "less trouble to put up with impure officials, costly city governments, a jobbing State legislation, an inferior sort of congressman, than to sacrifice his own business in the effort to set things right." It is less trouble to do nothing, and it is by no means certain that anything which might be done would bring about a better state of things. The forces of custom, inertia, and selfishness form too strong a barrier to reform, and so the citizen retires to the care of his own private interests.

Sometimes, again, the obstacle to public action lies in sensitiveness. To enter public life, though with the best of motives and the cleanest of records, is to be exposed to criticism and slander; the most honourable actions will be misrepresented. The meanest motives will be alleged; and many a man who might be ready to give his life in the service of his country, shrinks from risking his good name.

But whatever the excuses, the fact remains that too large a proportion of the members of a democratic State take no active part in political or municipal life. When Kossuth visited the United States, he uttered this warning: "If shipwreck ever befall your country, the rock upon which it will split will be

your devotion to your private interests at the expense of your duty to the State."

Some of the results of this neglect of public service are obvious enough. It gives undue preponderance to the self-seeking and the vicious. It implies acquiescence in corruption. It is a more dangerous enemy to reform than the most active opposition could ever be. Your true reformer exults in battle, and is ready to fight any declared enemy to the last gasp. But the heart is taken out of him as he contemplates the vast host who ought to be fighting on his side, but have not energy enough to take their place in the ranks, or interest enough even to give him a cheer as he goes to the front. "We are afflicted with the bad citizenship of good men. We expect bad men to be bad citizens; but when good men are bad citizens, public interests go to the bad with a rush."

But the most serious result of the neglect of civic duties is found in the effect upon the character of the citizen. He loses the chance of being educated, for the true education of a citizen can only come from the discharge of the duties of a citizen. On this point there is a curious contrast between the teaching of Carlyle and John Stuart Mill. Both

said hard things about the ordinary man. Carlyle speaks of "the innumerable foolish"; "twenty-nine millions, mostly fools"; "the able men are the diamond grains amongst the general mass of sand." "The mass of men consulted at hustings, upon any high matter whatsoever, is as ugly an exhibition of human stupidity as this world sees." "Your lordship, there are fools, cowards, knaves and gluttonous traitors, true only to their own appetite, in immense majority in every rank of life."

Nor was Mill more complimentary. He describes the majority as an uncultivated herd. He tells us that the lower classes are mostly habitual liars. He declares that "we look in vain amongst the working classes in general for the just pride which will choose to give good work for good wages; for the most part their sole endeavour is to receive as much and to return as little in the shape of service as possible." He has not the slightest confidence in their ability, at present, to take their part in the work of government. But the radical difference between these two writers lies in the fact that Mill had confidence in the improvement of the citizen, whereas Carlyle had none. Listen to Carlyle's despondent wail in his *Latter-Day Pamphlets*: "My friends, I grieve to

remind you, but it is eternally the fact; whom Heaven has made a slave, no parliament of men nor power that exists on Earth can render free. No; he is chained by fetters which parliaments with their millions cannot reach. You can label him free; yes, and it is but labelling him a solecism—bidding him to be the parent of solecisms wheresoever he goes. You can give him pumpkins, houses of ten-pound rent, houses of ten-thousand-pound; the bigger candle you light within the slave image of him, it will but show his slave features on the larger and more hideous scale. Heroism, manful wisdom is not his; many things you can give him, but that thing never. Him the Supreme Powers marked in the making of him, *slave*; appointed him, at his and our peril, not to command but to obey, in this world."

But Mill believed in the possibilities of education. It was the sole remedy and the sufficient remedy for present imperfection. And on this point the hopes of Mill are reinforced by the deeper philosophy of T. H. Green. He, too, could see clearly and could talk plainly about the faults of the average man. But he saw in every man a potential citizen. There was that in him that might be educated. Not only

in his reason, but in his feelings and desires there was the making of a free man—that is, one who could contribute freely to the common good.

What, then, is the education that comes through public service? Partly, the practical training which Mill seems to have had chiefly in mind. The gaining of the power to organise, to conduct affairs, to lead and to be led; the development of common-sense and of the sense of proportion; the capacity for knowing what ideas are practicable and what are mere idle dreams; the knowledge of human nature, and of how to deal with it—all this is of the highest practical value; and a nation which has gained this education is fit to govern itself, and to deal wisely with other nations. But public service involves a deeper training of character. Self-control is forced upon the man who tries to persuade or help his fellow-men. He gains the true measure of his powers as he attacks some ancient prejudice or vested interest. He learns humility, as he realises that his original ideas are unconscious plagiarisms, or that his favourite theories have been proved folly by experience. He learns sympathy, as he works with men of different classes and varied natures. He learns unselfishness, as he discovers it is the only key

to his brothers' hearts, and the only lever by which he can raise their lives. He understands the truth of the philosophy of life that Jeremy Bentham taught with a noble inconsistency:—"The way to be comfortable is to make others comfortable. The way to make others comfortable is to appear to love them. The way to appear to love them is to love them in reality." (Quoted by MacCunn, *Six Radical Thinkers*, p. 18.)

Nor must we forget the growing certainty of truth that comes from action. Coleridge tells us that if we want to restore the lustre of a truth which has become commonplace, we must translate it into action; and he might have added that if we want a truth which we hold feebly to take hold of us and grip us firmly, we must translate it into action. In a speech made some years ago, Dr Ingram, then head of the Oxford House, mentioned that he was once asked if he thought the House was doing much good to the neighbourhood. After satisfying the questioner on that point, he went on to say that he had noticed an effect even more remarkable on the members of the institution. Many of them came from Oxford with a feeble grasp on a traditional religion. After some months of work, these men

gained a real and living faith in the power of Christianity. They had heard what their fathers had told them and only half believed, but now they had seen with their own eyes what their religion could do in the transformation of character. They had watched it grappling with vice and weakness, and they knew, with a certainty that no argument could shake, that a divine strength and life were at work. This principle is true of other things than religion. If a man wants his political opinions, and his belief in human nature, and his theories of duty and service and sacrifice to become convictions and enthusiasms, he must translate them into action. No doubt the State gains much when her citizens unite in serving her. But it is the citizen who gains most when he serves. He reaps his reward in depth of character, in certainty of conviction, and in life, with all its powers of faith and hope and love exercised to the full.

But we must not suppose that in politics, as commonly defined, is the only avenue to public service. In municipal and city life there is a vast field of usefulness, too commonly neglected. The tendency of population to settle in cities is universal, but nowhere is it more marked than in Australia. The

application of machinery to agriculture has lessened the amount of human labour needed in the country. The development of manufactures has made it desirable for large bodies of men to crowd together, and improvements in methods of food transport have made it possible. The twentieth century will almost certainly be the age of great cities, and their government and administration will strain to the utmost the wisdom and energy of the people. At present we find utter indifference to civic duty. The idea of a corporate life is almost unknown. Most men work in one part of a city and live in another, and neglect their duty in both. The only motive which induces them to vote at municipal elections is the hope of keeping down the rates. Yet a great opportunity lies before them. To the municipality will fall the task of making the surroundings of life wholesome and beautiful. It will be able to make, what Jevons so ardently desired, experiments in social organisation. In the employment of labour, in the use of money, in the supply of public wants, and in the control of vice, it can try on a small scale and by various methods how to make morality a factor in common life. Whatever we may think of the schemes of the London County Council, they at least show the

possibility of corporate action inspired by great ideals; and every local council should be fired with a similar ambition to make its district an object-lesson in material and moral progress.

Then, again, there is directly philanthropic work, such as the relief of the sick poor or the rescue of children from hurtful surroundings by personal effort. In the case of the few, there is the life of thought which is to be lived for the sake of the many; not that the thinker's brain is to be stored with accumulated treasures from the past or ideals of beauty for the future, but that he may dispense to the hungry souls of other men the truths and hopes that have filled his own.

Even the daily work by which a citizen provides for his own needs should be regarded by himself and recognised by others as a public service. Ruskin reminds us: "Five great intellectual professions have hitherto existed in every civilised nation. The Soldier's profession is to *defend* it. The Pastor's to *teach* it. The Physician's *to keep it in health.* The Lawyer's to *enforce justice* in it. The Merchant's to *provide* for it. And the duty of all these men is, on due occasion, to *die* for it." Nor does he stop short at the Professions, as he calls them. "A labourer

serves his country with his spade, just as a man in the middle ranks of life serves it with sword, pen, or lancet." The principle applies to all life. The artisan, the wharf labourer, the street sweeper, equally with the doctor and the merchant, has his contribution to make to the common good. He may consider his work simply as a means of making a living for himself; and if so, there is no guarantee that he will put his heart and conscience into it. But if the ideal is recognised, the work is ennobled; ennobled in the eyes of society, for it is no mere self-seeking exercise of powers; and ennobled for the worker, for it becomes his gift to his fellow-men, and it must be his best. We have always had men to lay down their lives in defence of the honour and freedom of their country. Every soldier knows that his primary duty is to give himself when necessary for the safety of the army or the State. And every citizen should realise that these men are only doing in one way the duty which is his to do in another way. We need "intelligent patriotism" as the inspiration of social life.

It is through the discharge of social duty that we shall gain the solution of a well-known problem—How can the interests of society and of the individual

be reconciled? The old solution was that of the Manchester school. Let all men seek their own selfish interests, and unconsciously and involuntarily they will be doing their best for society. The grasping manufacturer of the eighteenth century who exacted the last hour of labour from men, women, and children; the trust promoter of the present day; the sweater; the Stock Exchange gambler; the ruler of the Congo Company; the artisan who is disloyal to his fellows—all seek their own interests, and in most cases it pays them to do so; yet in some mysterious way they are helping on the perfection of society. The doctrine shows a touching faith in the Divine omnipotence, which is evidently able to bring good out of evil, and to transmute individual selfishness into social blessing; but it is a faith not justified by experience. Unlimited selfish competition has not proved itself to be the best scheme of life.

Benjamin Kidd tells us the problem is insoluble. The interests of the individual not only have been in conflict with the interests of the social organism, but they always must be in conflict. They are inherently and essentially irreconcilable.

Without discussing the various fallacies that may be found in his statement, it is enough to point out

that the word "interests" is used in an ambiguous sense. What interests? material, intellectual, moral? Kidd seems to assume throughout that the only interests worth considering are material. He quotes from Mallock: "How many workmen of the present day would refuse an annuity of £200 a year on the chance that by doing so they might raise the rate of wages one per cent. in the course of three thousand years? Do any of us deny ourselves a single scuttle of coals so as to make our coalfields last for one more generation?" But do the rate of wages and the supply of coal represent the only interests of humanity? Whether for society or for the individual, there is a higher end than material wealth. The true interests of the individual are not concerned with the abundance of the things that he possesses, or with comfort, or even with happiness, but with character; and character finds its highest expression in a readiness to contribute to the good of others. Man has made the most of himself when he finds himself ready to devote himself and all his powers for the general good. He has gained most when he is ready to give most. This truth helps us to understand the goal of society. In its first stages, evolution had as its aim the production of man; in the evolution of society,

the aim is the production of a perfect society. But a perfect society can mean nothing else than the perfection of its members.

The goal of society, then, is the perfection of its members. The goal of the individual is his own perfection; but he approximates to perfection in so far as he gives himself for the good of his fellow-members. It is along these lines that the reconciliation of interests must take place. If society and the individual aimed at gaining material wealth, there might be conflict in securing a due proportion. But for both society and the individual, the only wealth is life and character; and the hope of the one to make the best of his own character cannot be in persistent opposition to the hope of the other to make the best of all men.

IV

THE DEMAND FOR EQUALITY

Rom. ii. 11: "There is no respect of persons with God."

Many will have read of the historic dinner-parties given by Thomas Jefferson when he became President of the United States. A convinced democrat himself, he determined to express his principles in every detail, and therefore abolished all the rules of precedence which had hitherto governed state functions. Every guest was to be on the same level. Men and women of the highest rank, representatives of the great empires of the Old World, looking for their seats of honour, found themselves mingled indiscriminately with envoys from petty states and with respectable American citizens who made honest livings by trade or farming, but possessed no long experience of the conventions of cultured social life. Indignant protests were met by a reminder that all men were equal, and that in future this was to be the

ruling principle of society. It is often supposed that the democratic demand for equality will result in the universal adoption of some such system; that it will mean the loud-voiced assertion that every man is as good as his master, the confusion of all social ranks, and the disappearance of all claims to precedence; and it is feared that courtesy, and deference, and gracious manners will fade as forgotten dreams.

But human nature blocks the way. No doubt our present social distinctions are too great. Most of them involve an utterly unchristian separation between classes. Many of them cannot stand the criticism of common-sense. The magic red cord is threaded in and out amongst our citizens on no intelligible principle; good birth, good manners, culture, character are found side by side with the vulgarity and insolence and immoral licence of the merely wealthy. But although our existing social differences are fantastic and immoral, there is no reason to suppose that all such distinctions will disappear; nor would it be well for us if they did. There must always remain the distinction between the few who are capable of leading and the many who are led, between the energetic and the lazy, the cultured and the boor, the strong and the feeble, the

hero and the coward; and in any organised society, differences in character must find expression in social rank. The only change will be that deference will be paid to real superiorities, not to mere accidental or fictitious claims.

But, underlying this early American experiment, there is a true principle. All men are equal, said Jefferson; therefore let us express this equality. The form of expression adopted was external, trivial, useless, but the principle remains.

But is it true that all men are equal? Two minutes' reflection would seem to show that the very opposite is the case. It is obvious that society has made men unequal in position, in possessions, in reputation. It is equally obvious that men are born unequal. There are differences in bodily strength, in mental power, in moral characteristics; differences in disposition, tastes, and aptitudes. Then, again, men have made themselves unequal. Some have increased their natural powers; others have allowed them to rust and decay, until even that which they had is taken from them. Surely the first thing that strikes an observer, as he contemplates humanity, with its infinite divisions and varieties and degrees of development, is the inequality of men.

Yet, in spite of natural inequalities, emphasised and made permanent by our social system, there does remain a very real equality. It has been expressed thus: "The central concept of modern ethics is the moral personality of man. This implies that each individual is able and is impelled to formulate for himself an ideal of perfection, towards the attainment of which he is conscious of an obligation to strive. This consciousness of obligation, which takes the form of a categorical imperative posited by his own reason, carries with it the logical assumption, first, of a freedom of the will, for without this there would not be even the capacity to obey the obligation which is felt; and, secondly, of an inherent right to be allowed to realise in fact, so far as is compatible with the reciprocal rights of others, those conditions of life which are implied in the ideal of personal development which each forms for himself" (Willoughby, *Political Theories of the Ancient World*, p. 205).

The essential equality of men is thus an ethical equality. It is based on the sense of moral obligation common to all men—the obligation resting on each to live as nearly as possible in conformity with his ideal; and it also implies a right to an opportunity to realise this ideal as far as may be. Of course, as life

goes on, inequalities manifest themselves; men make themselves morally unequal by striving with unequal energy. But all start from the same level; all are equal in this sense, that they are beings with a moral obligation to live the best life they know.

Here, again, we find that this is in agreement with Christian teaching. The Christian conception of humanity is that of a brotherhood, in which all are on a level. All belong to the great family of God, and in His sight there are no essential distinctions. All have a moral sense, all have the same duty, namely, to obey conscience and to live the best attainable life. All are the objects of equal love and compassion. All have the same need of redemption, the same offer of salvation, and of incorporation into the one Christ. All bow as equals before the Cross, and shall stand as equals before the Great White Throne. For all, the standard of judgment is the same: how far have they obeyed conscience and used opportunity, and been faithful to the truth possessed? In the sacraments of the Church the same principle is visibly expressed. All are on a level as they enter the fold by Holy Baptism. All are on a level as they come to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. The lesson runs through all the

teaching and practice of Christianity. There is no respect of persons with God. As moral beings, all are essentially equal in His sight.

Now, one aim of Democracy is to secure the recognition of this essential equality of men. In politics the victory is practically won. The series of struggles by which successive classes gained the franchise has now ceased. The metics and the plebs in ancient times; the smaller landholders, the burgesses, the common people—all have striven in turn, and now it is an accepted principle that every man has an equal right to do his best for the State, and an equal right for consideration at the hands of the State.

In the administration of justice, also, equality of consideration is now attained, at least in theory. The law knows no distinction between rich and poor, between the holder of a title and an artisan; though I need hardly remind you that this equality between rich and poor is still largely illusory. A rich man and a poor man have to pay the same amount of fine for similar offences. This seems to be equality, but to the one it means a week's income, to the other a negligible quantity. Our system of appeals has the same defect. The rich man can carry the case from

court to court, and may ruin his poorer rival, whatever be the final verdict. But these and similar blemishes are accidental and will be removed in time. The principle is now accepted that in the State and before the law all men should receive equal consideration.

In two other directions the principle of equality is still striving to find expression. As we have just seen, the fact that all men are under moral compulsion to form an ideal of life and to strive towards it, implies the right to an opportunity to approximate towards the ideal. Every man should have a chance to live the best life of which he is capable, and Democracy is striving to give every man a chance.

Not indeed that this is peculiar to Democracy. It is one of the necessary aims of the State, however it may be organised. Monarchies and oligarchies alike, if they are aiming at anything beyond personal or class gratification, must aim at allowing each citizen to make the best of himself. Long ago Aristotle said, "A city is a community of equals for the purpose of enjoying the best life possible" (*Politics*, bk. viii. c. 2); or, as Dr Rashdall puts it, "The State exists to promote the good life of its citizens."

The first aim, then, of modern Democracy is to secure as far as possible equality of opportunity. It

is important to notice that this does not mean to give every man the same opportunity. This gift might be desirable if all men had similar powers and similar aims. But we must deal with human nature; and as men are, with infinitely varied desires and capacities, if we are to be fair to them, the nature of the opportunity must vary. All men are not capable of deep thought, nor are all men likely to become skilful artisans or farmers. There would be little advantage gained by teaching the principles of agriculture to a future judge, or by providing an advanced training in philosophy for one who might be an excellent carpenter. Equality of opportunity implies a fair chance for every man to reach, not the same goal, but the goal for which his nature fits him.

But work is not the whole of a man's life, and so equality of opportunity means an equal possibility of leading the best life in all its aspects, the best life for body, mind, and spirit. We must try to give a fair chance of health and physical vigour, of general education for the mind, of home life for the emotions, of training and scope for the spiritual faculties. We cannot give natural powers when they are defective, but we must try to prevent the natural powers that do exist from being crushed by adverse forces. We

have to accept the fact that as men begin the race of life, some are more heavily handicapped than others. That is God's work, and we may leave it to Him to justify His system. We must see to it that society puts no unnecessary obstacle in the way of any competitors; and perhaps we may go further, and lighten the odds against the less fortunate.

To all this there is an obvious objection. It will be said at once that equality of opportunity is a mere dream which can never be realised. We cannot stand in the place of God, and judge with accuracy the latent capacities of a child's mind and character. We cannot forecast the needs of society in the next generation, and the kinds of work that will be possible or the positions that will be vacant. We cannot say what new forms of physical disease or moral temptation may arise to endanger the well-being of the coming citizen, or what new ideas or methods of life may help on his perfection. We do not know exactly what the best life will mean to each of the new generation, and so we cannot give exactly the right opportunity.

Let us grant it at once. We cannot give equality of opportunity. But we can enlarge opportunity. We can give greater equality than at present. We

can remove some of the obstacles, if not all. We can give some help, if not all the help required. We can give some men, at least, a fairer chance to make the best of themselves. We can keep perfect equality of opportunity as the ideal at which we are aiming. We do not hope to realise it for many generations, if indeed it will ever be realised; but it is foolish to do nothing because we cannot do everything at once. Here let me quote three statements from well-known writers. First we have Renan, who accepts our present exclusive system and justifies it: "Society is a vast organism, where entire classes should live by the glory and enjoyment of others, like the peasant of the *Ancien Régime*, who worked for the noble and loved him for it, and enjoyed the high life which his sweat enabled the others to lead." That is the common view of life. The millions should toil for the few, and cheerfully surrender their lives and happiness that a select class may enjoy itself to the full.

The next quotation is from Professor Marshall, who voices the discontent of the thoughtful and earnest student: "Now, at last, we are setting ourselves seriously to inquire whether there should be any so-called lower classes at all; that is, whether

there should be large numbers of people doomed from their birth to hard work in order to provide for others the requisites of a refined and cultured life, while they themselves are prevented by their poverty and toil from having any share or part in that life."

Then listen to Professor T. H. Green. He is speaking at the opening of a school for the sons of tradesmen at Oxford. He looks forward to the time "when all who have a special taste for learning will have open to them what has hitherto been unpleasantly called 'the education of a gentleman.' I confess to hoping for a time when that phrase will have lost its meaning, because the sort of education which alone makes the gentleman in any true sense will be within the reach of all. As it was the aspiration of Moses that all the Lord's people should be prophets, so, with all seriousness and reverence, we may hope and pray for a condition of English society in which all honest citizens will recognise themselves and be recognised by each other as gentlemen." There you get the Christian note. The men who are treated as equals by God, are to be treated as equals by their fellow-men. Not only a special kind of education, but all that makes a man and helps a man, all that is best for him and draws out the best in him,

is to be equally within the reach of all classes and all persons, to be used by those that are worthy.

Closely connected with the demand for equality of opportunity is a growing demand for economic equality, for equality of possessions. Certainly the characteristic mark of our present social system is inequality. Take one or two instances by way of illustration. The national income of Great Britain is about £1,800,000,000. One-third of this goes to one-thirtieth of the population. In the United States one-hundredth of the population holds more than half of the national wealth. In the great cities of England, and not only in London, nearly thirty per cent. of the population is on or below the poverty line. Or look at it from another point of view. The share of the labourer in the wealth that he helps to produce is steadily growing smaller. This statement will, of course, be disputed. Appeal will be made to reliable statistics, which show that the wages and the standard of comfort of the working classes are steadily rising. During the last fifty years in England the money wages of labourers have in many cases doubled. On the whole, the purchasing power of money has increased, through the growing cheapness of production. The working man is better housed, better fed,

enjoys more of the comforts and luxuries of life than at any former stage of the world's history. Yet the fact remains that the share of the labourer in the wealth he helps to produce is growing smaller. Absolutely he gets far more than he ever did before. But, relatively to the amount of wealth produced his proportion is less. The share of the labourer increases, but the share allotted to interest on capital and to rent and profits increases more rapidly. When we consider these two facts—that a very large proportion of the world's wealth is absorbed by a very few persons, and that the proportion allotted to the labourer is diminishing instead of increasing—it is not surprising that the popular voice is expressing a demand for economic equality, or, more accurately, for less inequality. It is right to call attention here to a common misconception. The ignorant and prejudiced often assert that the working classes are aiming at equality; and it is easy to show that an absolute and mechanical equality would be impossible, and if possible, would be unjust and pernicious. But there is no widespread demand for equality in the strict sense of the word. No labour organisation of the present day advocates equality. No thoughtful man wishes for it. But there is a very earnest demand

for such changes as will put an end to inequality in its present monstrous forms. For the sake of brevity and picturesqueness, the term "equality" may be used in popular speech, but the real meaning of the term as one of the aims of Democracy is simply "less inequality."

The demand is not surprising, nor need we wonder that the classes who profit by the present system should offer a strenuous resistance, and should find weighty reasons for their resistance. We are told that the motives underlying the cry for equality are of the lowest. To some extent it is based on envy of the more fortunate. The poor man hears of the life of the rich, its pleasures, its entertainments, its costly food and drink. He sees the rich clothing, the carriage or the motor, and the numerous dependants, and his soul is filled with a jealous anger. These joys are not what he craves for. His pleasures and luxuries would take another form. But he is vexed to the heart to feel that another man is living in ease and plenty while he has to struggle on with energies tasked to the utmost and desires never to be satisfied. Or instead of envy, it may be mere selfish greed that inspires him. The necessaries of life are not enough, and he craves for a fuller supply of

material comfort and means of enjoyment. The hog, we are told, wants a bigger sty and an overflowing trough. Opportunity is taken to give sound moral teaching as to the relation between life and circumstance. The highest life does not need wealth. The poor man can live virtuously, though his food is of the plainest and his home the humblest. He can educate his mind by studying great books in the admirable cheap editions of the present day. He can develop his artistic faculties and enjoy the purest pleasures by visiting the picture galleries, or by observing the beauties of nature in the public gardens, or even by contemplating the light of setting suns and the daily miracle of dawn. He can watch the stars at night, and feel his soul uplifted by the thought of the vastness and harmony of the Universe, and the majesty of the Creator of it all. He can go to church, when he is not detained by Sunday work, and take his place at the back, if he cannot afford a pew, and worship as heartily and devoutly as the most wealthy. All that is true, profoundly true, though it would come with a better grace from men who were more ready to surrender the wealth which, they say, is so unnecessary for life. And if the working classes are, in truth, only moved by envy

and jealousy, and by a selfish and unworthy greed for material possessions, then the duty of the Church of Christ is clear. She must say to them, what she so often forgets to say to their richer brethren, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses."

Then, again, we are told that economic equality would mean the ruin of society, for it would take away a necessary stimulus to progress. Men are not, as a rule, passionately fond of work. It requires a strong stimulus to induce them to put forth their best energies. For most men, the present motive for strenuous exertion lies in the hope of gaining more wealth than their neighbours. It means more comfort, higher possibilities for their children, less anxiety about the future. Those who have succeeded in their quest are object-lessons to their fellows. They teach the way in which wealth may be attained, and the satisfaction that follows the attainment. Take away this motive and this hope, and we are warned that every man will relapse into a dull endurance of things as they are, and an apathetic doing of just so much as is necessary to keep him in his present position.

In this also is contained a truth, though it might be noticed, in passing, that these two forms of argument do not seem to harmonise. We are told first that it is a low and greedy desire which impels men to crave for greater wealth, and in the interests of human nature we should try to diminish this desire and turn men's thoughts into nobler channels; and then we are warned that if we succeed in checking this low craving, we remove a necessary stimulus to progress and imperil the future of society.

However, it is not for me to reconcile conflicting arguments, but to ask you to think if the protest against excessive inequality has not a sound moral basis. First, it is an appeal to justice. We may admit that material reward should be in proportion to useful work, and without doubt some men do vastly more important work than others. Professional skill and organising ability should reap a reward in agreement with their social value. The skilful employer, for example, has a fair claim to the profits that he makes by his skill. If he is able to lead and inspire his workers; if he can choose the best men as foremen and give to others the work they can do best; if he can introduce economies in his management, labour-saving machines in his factories, wise

methods in distribution; if he can anticipate or create public needs; if he can open up new sources of supply or new markets for his products, he is doing a great service to society, and the profits that he creates by his ability may be claimed as a fair reward. But is that the history of all great fortunes? Do they not sometimes begin in underpayment of the workers; in other words, by robbery? Are there no complaints of unfair competition, in which rivals are ruthlessly crushed? No hints of monopolies, or of special concessions obtained by bribery? We have not many very wealthy men yet, but go to America and ask any reasonable man if he thought that most of the millionaires had received their money as fair payment for ability which was useful to society. No doubt it is a payment for ability of a kind; but it is often an ability to know when to bribe officials, when to make an unfair compact with a railway company, when to lie, when to cut down wages, when to pack a meeting, when to bribe a newspaper. It is ability, but it does not deserve social reward.

The popular outcry against inequality is partly based on the undeniable fact that a large proportion of the colossal fortunes of the present day owe their existence to monopolies and privileges obtained by

fraud, or to unjust treatment of wage-earners, or to other and more subtle forms of dishonesty. A social system which permits and rewards these methods is in need of mending. But there is a more radical evil involved. Even where industrial and business methods are perfectly honest according to the standards of the day, there is in our system an imperfection which necessarily causes injustice in the distribution of wealth.

I have already spoken of the acknowledged principle that each member of society should be rewarded in proportion to the service that he renders to society. If in any case a man is paid more than he has earned by service, there is injustice somewhere. How does our present system stand that test? Without going deeply into the matter, I may remind you that, for the production of wealth, several factors are essential. Capital is needed to help the muscular efforts of the labourer. Skill in organisation and management is needed to enable large bodies of men to work together to the best advantage. Land is needed from which the raw material may be derived, and there is need of the labourer's strength and efforts. These four factors—land, capital, skill in management, and labour—are, under modern conditions, essential.

Each contributes something to the production of wealth, and each claims a share in the result. Under our present system of competition, these shares are, broadly speaking, fairly allotted. Each factor in the production of wealth gets a share proportioned to the assistance it has given. So far, there is little complaint except from the ignorant. But look a little closer. We speak of land and capital, labour and ability. These are spoken of impersonally. They are things or forces, and ethical standards cannot be applied to things or forces. But if you translate them into terms of personality, the case is altered. We now deal with men, not with things, and to men we must apply ethical tests.

In the case of ability and labour, it is only in thought that we can separate these from personality. We may speak of ability as an abstraction, but we always mean the ability of a person or group of persons. So with labour; it must always mean the efforts of a person or group of persons. If we say that ability and labour are getting their due reward, we must mean that the persons who possess ability and the persons who work are receiving a share of wealth in proportion to the service they render. But capital and land are in a different category.

They are things; they are separable not only in thought but in fact from the persons who own them. They exist and they discharge their function whether owned by one person or by a group of persons, or held in common by a whole people. Just here comes in the true cause of complaint. It may be true that nothing more than a fair share of wealth is set aside as a return for the services of land and capital, but it does not necessarily follow that the persons who happen to own land and capital are only receiving a fair reward for their services. Take the familiar case of the unearned increment of land. A man comes into possession of a block of land in the heart of a town. He allows other people to build houses upon it, and takes the ground rent. The town grows into a city, the ground rent derived from the block increases enormously, and it naturally goes into the pocket of the landlord. It is inevitable that rent should exist; the block of land is more valuable, more useful for commercial purposes than other blocks at a greater distance. But though the land grows more valuable, the owner, merely as owner, has done nothing to serve society. He sits still and receives an income, which he may spend usefully or waste in foolish extravagance and riotous living. Of course, I do not

mean that all owners of land are idle and useless to society. Probably the majority of them cultivate and improve their land, and so provide means of employment and wealth. But they do this because they are employers as well as landowners. If they are landowners and nothing else, if they simply hold their property in idleness and take the growing rent which naturally comes to them, they are performing no useful function in society. Whatever the land, the mere thing, may receive, they, as persons, have no moral claim to reward. It may be possible to justify our system of land tenure on economic grounds. It may be the best system for the production of wealth. It may be difficult to change it without injustice. It certainly cannot be defended on grounds of social morality.

The capitalist stands on a different footing. He might consume his wealth instead of saving it, but he denies himself the pleasure of spending, and devotes it to producing further wealth. By this self-denial, this abstinence from enjoyment, he benefits society and deserves reward. Yet even in this case there is an uneasy suspicion that something is wrong. The first steps of saving are difficult, and demand a very real effort and sacrifice. But to speak of the

abstinence or self-denial of a millionaire who is content to enjoy his income without trenching on his capital, is to use words in a very technical and non-natural sense. The question is being raised in many quarters—Can that system be morally sound which gives the largest reward to the man who makes the least sacrifice? If we speak of capital, the system is just. When we speak of capitalists, of persons, there seems some room for doubt.

Our present system is open to another objection. In the case both of land and capital, the owners receive a reward which it is hard to justify. Not only do they receive the share of wealth which naturally comes to the mere things they possess, but, as persons, they gain a power over other persons which they have not deserved, and which society does not wish to give. Take an illustration. The owner of a well-known quarry has a dispute with his workmen, and closes the quarry for months or years. Let us assume that he had earned his quarries. He certainly had not earned the right to inflict suffering and privation on thousands of his fellow-creatures. Yet every wealthy man has it in his power to throw large numbers of men out of employment, and to cause widespread misery, in obedience to a

mere caprice. It is a revival of the despotism of the slaveowner or the feudal lord without its well-defined limitations.

A few months ago Mr Pierpont Morgan helped to allay a Wall Street panic by the timely loan of some millions of money. But the fact that he was able to remove trouble reminds us that he had an equal power to cause trouble. We may imagine the disastrous result if he had devoted those millions to fanning the flame, and so destroying the credit of New York. Up to a certain point the power possessed by the capitalist or landlord is kept in check by other forces. The organisation of the working classes and the force of public opinion are generally strong enough to prevent any exercise of tyranny. But when we meet with colossal fortunes controlled by stubborn wills, or with trusts and combines large enough and wealthy enough to defy public opinion, we find a dangerous control over the lives and happiness of subordinates. It is true that the majority of men have too much good-feeling and common-sense to use their powers badly. So it is true that many slaveowners treated their slaves mercifully. Yet it was felt to be wrong to give to one man such absolute power over the lives of others;

and we shall come to see before long that no system can be justified which gives to one man or to an exclusive body of men the power to dictate terms of employment, or, in other words, to determine the conditions of living for another class.

Thus we have seen that the popular demand for equality of possessions is not based on greed. It has morality at its back, for it is inspired by the belief that much of the present inequality is due to methods in themselves immoral, and much due to a system which does not fairly connect reward with social service. Wealth may be divided fairly enough as between impersonal claimants, but the persons who take the shares are often given more than they have earned. It is a demand for justice. As Carlyle says, "It is not what a man outwardly has or wants that constitutes the happiness or misery of him. Nakedness, hunger, distress of all kinds, death itself, have been cheerfully suffered when the heart was right. It is the feeling of injustice that is insupportable to all men. . . . To whatever other griefs the lower classes labour under, this bitterest and sorest grief now superadds itself—the unendurable conviction that they are unfairly dealt with, that their lot in this world is not founded on right, not even on necessity,

and is neither what it should be, nor what it shall be" (*Chartism*).

The final objection to the excessive inequality of our present system lies in its effect upon character. It does not conduce to the best life. It tends to degrade manhood. We cannot judge from the conditions of life in Australia. We are only at the beginning of things. We have more land than our population can effectively occupy; and while this safety-valve is open, the pressure of the industrial system is not felt. Our social institutions are still fluid, and a man passes readily from one class to another. We must go to older countries to see capitalism and competition working out their necessary results. The millionaire of New York, the slum of Chicago or London, these are the drunken helots of our civilisation; these are object-lessons which show the depths to which we may descend. With us the tree is young, and we can still admire its foliage and blossoms. There we see the tasting of the bitter fruit. On the one side we see a section of the people living a life of poverty which is often undeserved, and which has become habitual and hopeless. In the large towns of England one family in every ten is actually destitute. Three families in every ten are either

below the poverty line or so near to it that the slightest sickness or temporary loss of employment will make them actually destitute. It would be easy to draw a distressing picture of the misery involved; but I want you to think of this state of things simply as a menace to character. The privation of sufficient food and warmth lowers physical vitality, and this reacts on the will. The necessary overcrowding weakens the sense of decency and undermines virtue. The constant failure to get work, or to get adequate return for work, weakens the feeling of self-respect. Anxiety about the future tends to hopelessness. The contrast with the more fortunate classes breeds bitterness. The pressure of need often forces compliance with terms which are unjust, or suggests means which are immoral. The hopeless struggle leaves neither energy nor scope for the higher elements in life. The average man who is in daily uncertainty about his next meal, who is starving while his neighbours have abundance, is not likely to be either a good citizen or a good Christian. I say, the average man. No doubt some have strength to rise above their surroundings, and to be serenely indifferent to the pricks of circumstance. There are nature's noblemen and true poets and Christian saints

amongst the destitute. But the pressure of extreme poverty is a force constantly acting for the worse on body and character, and it is a force too strong for the average man to resist. A recent writer says, "It would be a theme for the psychological analysis of a great novelist to describe the slow degradation of the soul when a poor man becomes a pauper. During the great industrial crisis in the nineties, I saw good men go into disreputable lines of employment, and respectable widows consent to live with men who would support them and their children. One could hear human virtue cracking and crumbling all round" (Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, p. 238).

Then consider the effect on character of excessive riches. Here is another case of human virtue cracking and crumbling all round. It is a matter of common observation that amongst the very rich self-indulgence and moral licence are characteristic features. We find an arrogant pride in wealth, and contempt for those who have few possessions; an utter hardness of heart, without insight, without sympathy. We find a materialism which has no vision of things unseen; which has no knowledge of God, no use for religion; which employs art and beauty only for ostentation;

which too often issues in a frank animalism. Extreme poverty is dangerous to character, but excessive wealth is almost necessarily fatal. There are exceptions, as in the case of the very poor. There are Christian men amongst the very rich, as there were saints in Cæsar's household. But if we were searching for saints to-day, the ranks of the plutocracy in America or elsewhere would form the least likely field.

When we see how riches and poverty in their extreme form tend to degrade character; when we remember also that the influence of the very rich or the very poor extends to other classes, causing in the one case a depressing fear, in the other a degrading hope, can we wonder that the popular demand for a change in the system which permits excessive inequality grows more earnest and insistent? Nor is the demand unchristian. A society which utters the prayer, "Bring us not into temptation," is justified in trying to lighten the strain of temptation for those at either end of the social scale.

V

THE COMPETITIVE SYSTEM

S. MATT. xix. 19: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

ONE outstanding fact in our Western civilisation is the extension of the competitive system. The struggle for existence by which progress in the sub-human world was assured has been handed down as an element in human life. Man has to fight with nature and with his fellow-man. From the first, he has had to face heat and cold, fire and flood, pestilence and death in order to procure his food. From the first, tribe has fought against tribe, nation against nation, sometimes from secondary motives, but, as a rule, to secure a larger share in the means of living. But there is another form of conflict. The world of commerce and industry is now organised on a basis of competition. First we have the competition of nation with nation for the markets of the world. The political struggle of the eighteenth century to secure

territory is replaced in the nineteenth and twentieth by the struggle to secure opportunities of trade. Then there is the competition between different groups, as between workers and employers — the workers striving to get as much as possible in return for their labour, the employers striving to give as little as possible; or the conflict between the groups of producers and consumers, conducted on similar principles. Lastly, there is the struggle within the group—workers competing against workers in their anxiety to get a chance of wages; employers competing against employers in their anxiety to get labourers. It is simply the old struggle for existence transferred to commercial and industrial life.

We are warned that in the near future this struggle is likely to grow more intense than ever. One of the popular demands of the present day is for greater equality of opportunity, and that means that men of all ranks and classes will be admitted to compete on equal terms for all the prizes of life. The positions which have hitherto been practically confined to a few will be thrown open to all comers; and as the number of competitors increases, the competition must grow more severe.

When we consider the effects of this system of

struggle, we find that in the subhuman world it makes for progress; the strong survive, the weak perish. In intertribal and international conflicts, the result is the destruction of the feebler races and the gradual strengthening of the normal type of manhood. So also in social competition we may see the promise of good. The strongest, the most prudent, the most skilful, the most industrious—these tend to survive. The men who are weaker in will or brain or body tend to disappear. The ultimate effect surely must be to improve the race. Naturally we find on every side enthusiastic advocates of the system of free competition. Sir Henry Maine speaks of "the beneficent private war which makes one man strive to climb on the shoulders of another, and remain there through the law of the survival of the fittest." Herbert Spencer assures us that "the well-being of existing humanity and the unfolding of it into ultimate perfection are both secured by that same beneficent, though severe, discipline to which the animate creation at large is subject; a discipline which is pitiless for the working out of good; a felicity-pursuing law, which never swerves for the avoidance of partial and temporary suffering. The poverty of the incapable, the distresses that come upon the

improvident, the starvation of the idle, and those shoulderings aside of the weak by the strong which leave so many in shallows and miseries, are the decrees of a large, far-seeing benevolence" (*The Man v. The State*, p. 67).

Confident appeal is made to the results of the system. The Englishman points with pride to the fact that free competition has given his nation the foremost place in the commerce of the civilised world. Look at the giant factories and splendid machinery; the development of invention and the growth of wealth. See how the income of Great Britain has grown from £515,000,000 in 1843 to £1,700,000,000 in 1903! See how the wealth of the United States increased from £1,400,000,000 in 1850 to £13,000,000,000 in 1890! What more convincing proof of the advantages of the competitive system do you require?

Look at us, cry the successful manufacturers and merchants. See what men the system produces! Notice our energy, our enterprise, our intelligence, our persistence, our courage. We are the fittest for modern life, and we have survived in the struggle. Yes, it is all very marvellous; the growth of business capacity, the development of leadership, the control

over Nature's forces, the outpouring of the stream of wealth. But as we watch and wonder, we begin to reflect. This system, which seems so admirable, flatly contradicts, not only the principles of Christianity, but the principle on which our social life professes to be based—"Treat every man as an end in himself, not as a means to an end." In other words, we should allow every man and help every man to make the best of himself and his life. But, in a system of unlimited competition, each man considers his own life and his own success as *the* end, and treats every other man as a means to that end. As he struggles upwards he uses other men's shoulders as stepping-stones. He may regret the unfortunate necessity which compels him to trample upon them; but, if he wants to succeed, he cannot afford to consider their position or their hopes. They can look upon themselves as ends if they like, but they must be sacrificed if they stand in the way of his triumph.

Competition may, possibly, be a law of the universe, but, certainly, it is inconsistent wlth the recognition of the rights of personality.

Then, again, the results of this system are not wholly admirable. If we scrutinise closely the vast mass of products that is being spread over the world,

we notice how large a proportion is made of inferior materials, meant for sale and not for use, badly designed, hastily put together, poor imitations of something better. If we look at the methods by which this wealth is distributed, we are confronted by lying advertisements, false descriptions, tricks of trade, and secret commissions. We see how the food products are adulterated with hurtful ingredients. "Several years ago, the Secretary of Agriculture estimated that 30 per cent. of the money paid for food products in the United States is paid for adulterated or misbranded goods" (Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, p. 269). And in many cases, especially in the cheap goods that the poor are compelled to use, the adulteration is dangerous to health.

Or think of the tendency of the competitive system to make use of the labour of children and women, under conditions of positive cruelty, because such labour is cheap. Less than fifty years ago in England there were children of seven years of age working in factories for fifteen hours a day. Such iniquities are now forbidden in England. But what is the state of things in America? In the United States, between 1890 and 1900, the number of children employed in factories increased 40 per cent. In 1903, 20,000

children under twelve years of age were at work in Southern factories, in many cases working for twelve hours a day. Only last year the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church was compelled to pass the following resolution: "Whereas the evil of child labour is apparently on the increase in this Christian country, and it is known that the employment of children in factories, mines, and shops reduces wages to the child's standard, disintegrates the family, deprives the child of his natural rights to a period of training and a time for play, and depreciates the human stock; and whereas we recognise the responsibility of the Church for our ethical as well as our spiritual standard; therefore we call upon employers and parents to use example and influence toward better legislation and better enforcement of the laws for the protection of children, to the end that exploitation of the labour of children shall become impossible in this Christian country."

Even Australia is not yet free from sin in this respect. Not in factories, but in bush life and on dairy farms the burden laid upon young shoulders is often far too heavy, and the very care taken by the State to enforce education makes it heavier. Case after case could be quoted in which the child's life is made

up of hours of labour on the farm, followed by a long walk to school, four hours of instruction received by tired brains, and then the walk home to more farm work.

That is the final infamy of a society, to allow its children's lives to be exploited for the sake of wealth.

"Do you hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?

. . . . . .

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places
With eyes turned on Deity.
'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.'"

Then we have the sweating system as a persistent fungus-growth on competitive societies. I may remind you of some of the cases by which a few years ago the conscience of Melbourne was shocked—girls found stitching in dens for twelve hours a day, earning from two to twelve shillings a week. Some

working for ninety hours a week for a wage of nine shillings. Shirtmakers earning eleven shillings a week. Machinists at five shillings a week. (*Cf.* W. P. Reeves, *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand.*)

Ancient history, no doubt. Such cases cannot recur under our legislation. But such cases are common enough in older countries; and such cases would inevitably recur here if the competitive system were freed from restrictive legislation.

Or consider the death-roll through accident, due in so many cases to the excessive speed born of competition, or to the refusal of employers and shipowners to lessen their profits by the use of safety-appliances or the adoption of humane regulations. Or think of the continuous overstrain to which large classes of workers are subject, so severe that, in America at least, the middle-aged are found in cemeteries, and only the young in factories. Or take English figures. In Great Britain the average age of life amongst the wealthy varies between fifty-five and sixty-five years. Amongst the working class it is twenty-eight years. In London the death-rate is more than four times greater in the poorer districts than amongst the well-to-do. All these are familiar

facts, but they must be weighed well before we join in the chorus of praise for this beneficent private war.

Then consider the effects of this system on the character of the competitors. Motives are corrupted by the persistent preaching of the gospel of success. From the schoolroom to the grave, the lesson of self-seeking is taught, sometimes veiled, sometimes in shameless nakedness, but always taught. And when, in the life of action, the struggle becomes severe, there is the constant temptation to lighten its severity. Sometimes the relief is found in dishonesty; and if the master gives way, the servant must choose between forfeiting his self-respect or losing his position. Sometimes the way of escape is sought in gambling, which promises the easiest road to wealth and success. But even if the struggle be conducted honestly, it is at the expense of the nobler elements of character and the better gifts of life. Sympathy withers at the root as the conception of brotherhood becomes merged in that of rivalry, and the man whose energies are strained to the uttermost in striving to climb on his neighbour's shoulders and retain his precarious footing has little opportunity for serving either God or the State.

Or test the system by its finest fruits. In the

multi-millionaire we see the very flower and crown of competition. The Napoleon of finance or industry he is sometimes called. The term is well chosen, for the Napoleon of military genius felt himself superior to the rules of morality binding on lesser men, and his successor in the industrial war too often attains to the same bad eminence. By his courage and enterprise and intelligence, of a kind, he has proved himself the fittest to live, but we do not look to him for the qualities that make life worth living. We have learned not to expect in him the deep human sympathy, the clear conscience, the instinctive shrinking from falsehood in word and act, the public spirit, the generous readiness for sacrifice, the humility, the reverence that we find in human nature at its best.

Let us, then, be quite clear as to our reasons for rejecting the competitive system as an ideal. We do not reject it because it is sometimes wasteful of wealth, for on the whole it may be economical. Nor because it produces suffering, for suffering makes men. But because it is based on selfishness; because it ignores the rights of personality; because it destroys some of the better qualities of manhood; because it sets a low aim before men; because it wears out their lives by a strain which leaves them

little opportunity for higher things; because it causes unnecessary temptation to dishonesty; because it sears the sympathies and blunts the conscience.

We must not suppose that this system was allowed to develop without protest. First it was condemned by the instinct of the working classes; and this is another illustration of the fact that the popular judgment, though not always able to express its reasons, is generally sounder and more reliable than the judgment of the educated classes. In this case the economists, with one voice, upheld competition and proclaimed its advantages. They were supported by the men of science, who had accepted the theory of Darwin, and who believed that any opposition to the system, or any attempt to modify it, was both unreasonable and futile. Yet the masses were right, and the experts were wrong.

There were protests, too, from the side of religion. Competition was selfish, and therefore unfit to be the sole guiding principle of a Christian society. Maurice protested: "I do not see my way further than this. Competition is put forth as the law of the universe; that is a lie." We have Kingsley's sarcastic eulogy: "Sweet Competition! Heavenly Maid! Nowadays hymned alike by penny-a-liners and philosophers as

the ground of all society—the only real preserver of the earth! Why not of Heaven, too? Perhaps there is competition among the angels, and Gabriel and Raphael have won their rank by doing the maximum of worship on the minimum of grace. We shall know some day. In the meanwhile, 'these are thy works, thou parent of all good.' Man eating man, man eaten by man, in every variety of degree and method. Why does not some enthusiastic political economist write an epic on 'The Consecration of Cannibalism'?" (*Cheap Clothes and Nasty*).

But these were looked upon as the protests of emotional men, who, from their position and their habit of mind, were disinclined to face the hard facts of life.

From the quarter whence it was least expected came the most crushing attack. The science of biology was the very foundation of the defence of competition. Darwin traced for us the history and the beneficent results of the struggle for existence in the lower world of nature. But the students of Darwin seemed to have been so lost in admiration of his great work that they omitted to read its concluding pages. There he makes a statement of profound significance. "Important as the struggle for existence

has been, and even still is; yet, as far as the highest part of man's nature is concerned, there are other agencies more important. For the moral qualities are advanced, either directly or indirectly, much more through the effect of habit, the reasoning powers, instruction, religion, etc., than through natural selection." It was Huxley, however, who drew out the full meaning of the hint thus given. I need hardly remind you how clearly and emphatically he taught in his Romanes Lecture that it was man's duty, not to submit to the natural struggle for existence, but to control it in the interests of reason and morality.

But we are solemnly warned that any such attempt would be suicidal. Biologists point to the fact that any group of animals which has been relieved from the need of conflict tends to deteriorate. Spencer and Kidd and many others assure us that a society which checks the competitive process is likewise doomed. Those who oppose Socialism often attack it on this ground. They say that it aims at the suppression of conflict, and that if a socialistic State succeeded in suppressing conflict, it would destroy one of the necessary conditions of human progress, and must eventually be swept away by less refined rivals.

But before discussing prophecy, let us look at history. I may remind you in passing that in such well-known books as those of Henry Drummond and Kropotkine, you may find ample illustration of the fact that amongst the lower animals co-operation is found as well as competition, and that progress is secured by the struggle for the life of others as well as by the merely selfish struggle for existence. But putting this aside, we find in human society from the first a tendency to check unlimited competition, in the interests of reason and morality. New ideas are introduced into social life, and these become controlling social forces. Take, for example, the competition between nations. At first, war is waged without any limitation but the will of the stronger. It is accompanied by brutality, wasteful destruction of property, slaughter of captives, extermination of whole tribes. Achilles drags the body of Hector round the walls of Troy. Joshua destroys man, woman, and child in Jericho. Thence we trace the gradual mitigation of the horrors of war, through merciful custom and international agreement, till we come to the Red Cross Society, and the British care for the wives and children of their South African foes. Sometimes these new ideas have but a temporary

effect, as when the thought of the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre flashes across Europe, and for a season the nations cease to fly at one another's throats, and combine to do what they believe to be God's will. Or when the Christian Church preaches the Truce of God, and for a day or for a year peace reigns. But when the merciful thought is universally accepted, or when it is embodied in a law or institution, it becomes a permanent moral restriction on freedom of competition. And it is clear that such restrictions are justified by their effects. They reduce the sum of human misery; what is of far more importance, they raise the level of human character, and yet they do not diminish efficiency. A recent instance may be taken by way of illustration. Military experts tell us that in the South African war English generals were too careful of human life. The war might have been sooner ended if, at times, more troops had been sacrificed or sterner measures adopted. That may be so, but the moral restrictions on the savagery of the conflict tend in the long-run to increase the efficiency of England as a fighting power. She has gained by the strength which comes of self-restraint, by the respect and affection of her own people, and by the absence of bitter memories in the minds of her

former foes, and these are valuable assets in the struggle for existence.

Or turn from war to the industrial conflicts of the day. We find in Factory Acts and similar legislation an attempt to check unlimited competition, and it is worth while to see how they achieve their purpose. In most industries, besides the competition between manufacturers and workmen, there is another competition within each of these groups. Each manufacturer strives to undersell his rival manufacturers; each labourer strives to get and retain employment, even though some of his fellows are left out in the cold; and in each case the competition within the group may have a bad effect. The manufacturer has two methods by which he can reduce the cost of production and so undersell his rivals. One method is to organise his factory more wisely, to manage it more economically, to introduce improved machinery, to use new inventions and better processes, and so produce his goods at lower cost. If he adopts this plan there is clearly a social gain. But a simpler way to reduce expenses is to lower the wages of his workmen or to insist on longer hours. In this case, though the financial gain to the employer might be just as great, there would be a loss to society in

general. The workers receive less money or have less leisure time, and the result is that for each man the standard of life and the possibilities of life are reduced in the present, and the children are more heavily handicapped as regards food and housing and opportunities. The effect of this form of competition is thus to degrade the labouring class, and to provide no countervailing social benefit by improving the employers or the methods of production. In the same way, the workers who are competing for places may try to secure them by two methods. One is to make themselves more efficient workers, more skilful, more highly trained, more industrious, and so gain an advantage in the competition. The other is to offer to work for lower wages and longer hours than their rivals, and so make themselves and their children less useful members of society. In the first case competition raises the workers; in the second, it degrades them. Then an Act is passed which fixes the wages to be paid and the hours to be worked. This at once puts an end to competition on the low and injurious level. No employer can economise at the expense of his workers. No labourer can offer to work for wages and hours which would be hurtful to him or to his class. But competition on the higher level remains.

The employer who wishes to succeed must strain every nerve to become a more capable employer, the worker to become a more capable worker. Competition is not killed, but it is purged of its more immoral elements. It becomes a competition in excellence.

That is the object of much of our social legislation. Factory Acts, Wages Boards, and the like aim at fixing a level below which competition may cease. There are to be certain conditions of industry defined by law, such as a minimum rate of wage, a maximum time of work, a fixed number of cubic feet of air, adequate safety appliances, and so on. These are indispensable for a decent, healthy life, and so they are to be independent of competition. However great the strain due to greed on the one side, or poverty on the other, no man is to ask or offer dispensation from these conditions. But above this level, competition may still be allowed.

Then, again, every attempt to introduce the principle of co-operation is in itself an attempt to raise the level of the struggle for existence. The trades-union checks injurious competition within the group of workers. The profit-sharing business checks competition between employers and workers. The

association for co-operative production removes the employer and unites the workers, and so kills one form of competition and checks the other. And in the ever-widening field of state or municipal employment we find the same principle, that competition on a low level is to be discouraged. The group of traders in fierce conflict with each other is replaced by the whole body of citizens harmoniously arranging to satisfy a public want. The wages and conditions of work are fixed beforehand, and so the workers are not tempted to underbid their neighbours. Stability of character and excellence of work determine the chances of employment. The best man wins, not the man who is prepared to take a mean advantage.

But a difficulty may be suggested. Granting that the form of competition may be changed, and that its level may be raised, does it not still remain selfish in its essence, and therefore anti-social and unchristian? If so, better leave it in its undisguised brutality, rather than make it less repulsive, though equally vicious. Fortunately for society, as competition becomes restricted to higher forms, it loses not only the appearance but the spirit of selfishness. It tends to become a social, not an anti-social force.

If two labourers try to undersell one another in the labour market, the struggle is absolutely selfish, and does no good either to the rivals or to society. The successful man gains a wage that degrades him. The employer gains an inefficient and probably discontented worker. The loser gets nothing, and the standard of living for the whole class has been lowered. There is a loss all round. But suppose that the next stage has been reached, and each strives to win by making his work the best possible, then there is clearly a social gain. Not only does the employer secure the best available skill, not only is the standard of living maintained at a high level, but both the competitors have become more efficient, and therefore more useful to society. And there is a new factor introduced. The bare selfishness of the rivalry is mitigated by the interest and pride that each man takes in his work, apart from its results for himself. His thoughts are concentrated on its thoroughness or artistic finish. The perfection of the work itself becomes his aim, and he forgets that he is seeking to secure profit. And if we look at a higher stage still, we shall see that this new factor tends to exclude selfishness altogether.

At the present time hundreds of scientific men

are engaged in trying to discover a remedy for cancer. There is intense rivalry, national and personal, but it is hardly a selfish rivalry. These men are not thinking of heavy fees as the reward of their research. As soon as a discovery is made, it is given freely to the world. Some may be influenced by the desire for reputation, but the majority are spurred on by pure scientific enthusiasm, or by the higher ambition to relieve mankind of haunting fear and agonising pain. And whoever may reach the goal first, all the competitors gain and all the world gains by the struggle and the sacrifice involved.

So in the world of thought and art, there is a rivalry which is wholly unselfish and wholly beneficial. Men are trying to grasp great ideas and to express them by language or colour. But the success is always shared, and it only becomes success by being shared. The poet or the artist has a vision of the beauty which is hidden from the mass, and at once his aim is to reveal this vision. He succeeds in so far as he can make others see what he sees. The dog that has snatched a bone from a rival goes off to enjoy it by himself. The motive of the struggle was this selfish appropriation. But an idea or a truth cannot be selfishly appropriated. If we have gained

it, sooner or later the world must gain it, and the effort to impart it to the world makes it all the more our own.

We have seen, then, that the instinctive protests of the working classes against the competitive system were amply justified. It is a system admirably adapted to cause improvement in the subhuman world, but quite unsuited to a society which is guided by reason and aims at moral perfection. If unchecked, it is wasteful and cruel as it deals with lives, and debasing in its effects on character. And experience gives little support to those prophets of evil who warn us that Nature's methods must not be checked. "Interfere with a natural process," says Herbert Spencer, "and you will inevitably do more harm than good." But man has continually interfered with the natural struggle for existence, and so far he has done more good than harm. "Abolish the rivalry of life," cries Benjamin Kidd, "and you will cause stagnation and decay." But history shows that man can modify the rivalry and yet retain the effort which is essential to progress. The struggle may remain, though on a higher level and in less brutal forms.

There is no reason to fear that, with the advance of civilisation, the stimulus to effort will grow too weak.

We cannot induce nature to deal more gently with us. We shall always have to face her stern Law of Diminishing Returns, and the diseases and blights and catastrophes which steal from man the fruits of his labour. Science can do much to aid us. It can make arid regions fertile. It can develop new sources of food supply, and wage successful war against natural enemies. But the pressure of population continually renews the strain, and man will never be able to enjoy comfort without effort.

Nor can we suppose that in social life conflict will ever cease. There will always be the fight with moral evil and its results; and we may believe that much of the energy now devoted to the struggle for food will be engaged in this nobler war. The care for the weaker classes will be carried on more systematically. In nature the failures are speedily swept out of existence, and, on merely biological principles, society would benefit immensely if the same fate befell the unfit. The physically and mentally defective, the morally weak, the aged, the criminal, the loafer, the pauper—these are a heavy drag on the wealth and energy of the strong, and natural science would suggest their extermination. But this would be both a crime and a blunder. A crime; for, after

all, the unfit are persons, with personal rights which must be respected, and with possibilities of improvement and future fitness which must be developed. A blunder; because society would lose one of the most effective means of strengthening social virtues. The citizen who is in the thick of the fight against poverty, or intemperance, or disease will develop not only compassion and sympathy, but virility and force of character, far more quickly than if he were struggling for a crust for himself. Every charitable institution, every society for philanthropic work, is worth far more to social life than it costs, for the cost is repaid in the hearts and wills of those who work for it.

As long as man has to depend for his food on the uncertain gifts of nature, as long as he is confronted by sin in human life, as long as he sees imperfection and weakness which he may remedy, necessity and duty and love will still spur him on to strenuous effort. There must be pressure to make the best of men. But as the progress of society lightens the burden of primitive poverty and brutal conflict, as the man has to fight less keenly for his own hand, he feels himself more strongly attracted by social ideals, more sensitive to social duties. The pressure is still

there, though it has changed its form. It has ceased to appeal to selfishness.

Here, then, lies the task of popular government. Unchecked competition is unchristian in principle, cruel in its methods, degrading in its results. It must be controlled and limited by reason and morality. Between nations, war must be replaced by arbitration. In commerce and industry, the idea of brotherhood must find fuller expression in co-operation. Where competition remains, it must be raised to a higher level and purged of brutal selfishness; and the energy thus set free must be employed in social service. Dr Channing used to say, "The last triumph of Christianity will be a triumph over competition"; and it is for Democracy to hasten this triumph.

VI

CIRCUMSTANCES AND CHARACTER

S. MATT. v. 33: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

THREE years ago Mr Arthur Shadwell published a book entitled *Industrial Efficiency*, which contained an elaborate comparison of the working classes of England, Germany, and America. The industrial system of each nation was analysed. The various factors—education, hereditary tendencies, physical strength, machinery, markets, fiscal policy, conditions of labour—were studied. But at the back of it all is the element which determines final failure or success, the character of the worker. The American, with all his quickness and cleverness, with all his natural advantages and mechanical appliances, has not taken the position he might have occupied because of a flaw in character. He lacks perseverance and thoroughness. As Lowell warned him long ago, he is too

ready to be content with the second-best. The German has infinite perseverance and makes a better use of science than his English competitor, but his fault is the want of initiative and self-reliance. The English worker still holds a high position through certain moral qualities, but there are signs that his devotion to amusement is weakening his devotion to his work. He is not putting his heart into it as he used to do. So, in every case, the secret of industrial efficiency or non-efficiency is ultimately found in character. After we know everything about machinery and organisation, we have to ask—What is the man? What is the moral stuff of which he is made?

In all forms of social organisation, success or failure depends on the character of the members. A striking illustration of this fact is found in the history of the early communistic settlements in America, founded under the inspiration of Owen and Fourier. Within ten years forty-five communities were founded on purely secular lines.

Before two years had passed, twenty-five had failed. None survived for a generation. In the case of one of them—the experiment at New Harmony—Robert Owen himself explains the reason for collapse. He

lays the blame on the character of the members. As he expressed it, "I wanted honesty, and I got dishonesty. I wanted temperance, and I was continually troubled with the intemperate. I wanted cleanliness, and I found dirt. I wanted carefulness, and found waste. I wanted desire for knowledge, and found apathy," and so on. We might sum up his grievance shortly. He wanted angels, and he found men. Similar complaints come from other communities. The epitaph on one records, "Self-love was a spirit that could not be exorcised." Another complains of "want of harmony and brotherly feeling," and of "unwillingness to make sacrifices." Another reports, "The members had not entire confidence in one another."

One community sums up the situation in a sentence: "There was a deficiency of wealth, wisdom, and goodness." Of course there are many communities in America which have survived for long periods and prospered exceedingly. But without exception these were religious in their origin, as for example the Shakers. Experience shows that the force of religious enthusiasm, however grotesque, however mistaken, may be successful in counteracting those defects of character which have ruined the merely secular

institutions. Experience in Australia leads to precisely the same conclusion. Where village settlements and similar organisations have failed, the cause is to be sought first of all in the characters of the men concerned.

Turn to another class of experiments. One of the most hopeful movements of modern times is the growth of co-operative industry amongst the working classes. By peaceful means large bodies of workmen are regaining the control of the instruments of production, and securing for themselves the full reward of their labour. But here, again, success or failure depends on character. The movement has sometimes failed; but if so, it is because men have not shown the willingness to submit to discipline, the energy, the foresight, the ability to work with others that the system demands. On the other side, we may quote the judgment of a Huddersfield manufacturer who had been brought into closest contact with the movement. "He believes that co-operative business is going to be the fittest that will survive in the competition of the business world, because its work is better and more economically done, because co-operative workmen are steadier, because the absence of adulteration, misrepresentation, and other trade

tricks makes it more acceptable to the consumer, and its copartnership makes it better for the workmen." (Quoted by H. D. Lloyd, *Labour Copartnership*, p. 266.)

"Work better done," "workmen steadier," "absence of trade tricks," "copartnership better for the workmen"—all these mean character. Or consider this: "I asked Mr G. M. Ludlow what reason he had for thinking that co-operation would survive in a business world like ours. He replied that the co-operators would survive because they had most 'grit'" (*ibid.*, p. 268).

Or take the world-wide movement towards Socialism. As a scheme of life it has many difficulties, but they all resolve themselves into questions of character. Can we get directors of industry who will exert all their powers when the hope of a great private fortune is taken from them? Will the mass of the workers be obedient to authority when their officers are chosen by themselves? Will they show sufficient self-control to provide for the economic needs of the future at the expense of present enjoyment? Will they work with the same energy when the fear of starvation ceases to be an effective stimulus? Will they retain self-reliance and independence when society

takes over the direction of their labour? Diverse answers may be given to these questions, but all agree that these questions are fundamental. Socialism is impossible unless character improves. As the leader of the Australian Labour Party said a few months ago: "There was universal sympathy with the broad aims of Socialism, and with the desire that those who were willing to live by work should have some guarantee that their children would be put beyond the possibility of want. So long as they were willing to labour for their existence, that ideal was a good one. Where they joined issue with their extreme Socialist friends was that they refused to believe that while human nature remained as it was, and until the natural process of enlightenment and civic education had advanced much further than it had, any complete system of Socialism could do anything else but break down. . . . Their socialistic friends themselves were the reverse of friendly on some occasions, and human nature existed among them just as it did amongst every other section of the community, so that it was utterly hopeless to expect that men could suddenly transform society from its present condition, while units were warring with one another, into an ideal state where each

worked in harmony with the other, and everyone took on his shoulders his full share of responsibility, and was content to do unto others as he should be done by. That state of things could not come immediately." (Speech by Mr Watson, reported in the *Argus*.)

And even in the semi-socialistic legislation of the present day, we see what a tremendous strain is being thrown upon character. The State has taken the whole of the social life under its control. Sometimes it employs labour directly, but in all cases it lays down conditions under which labour shall be employed. Sometimes it teaches; always it regulates schools. Sometimes it provides dwellings; always it decides how dwellings shall be built. It taxes, it interferes, it forbids, it commands; and, in nearly every case, the interference of the State, however righteous, however necessary, imposes additional expense on some one. The manufacturer has to pay the cost of safety appliances; the taxpayers have to pay the salaries of inspectors; the consumers have to pay the increased cost of goods; the citizen has to pay for the education of his own and other people's children, or to pay higher rents for more healthy but more expensive houses. And each voter has his share in determining

what burdens must be imposed, and on whom they shall fall. There comes the strain on character. He must put aside all thought of his personal interests or his class interests. He must let his conscience decide what is best and what is just for others, even though it means heavy expense for himself. The employer must learn to take wider views than those suggested by his own profits. The worker must vote for measures which treat even the capitalist with justice. There must be a steady effort to exclude personal bias from political decisions. And when the decision is made and the burden imposed, it needs a strong character to bear it without grumbling and without attempts at evasion.

In yet another way we see how modern legislation imposes a strain on the character of the citizens. Attempts are being made to redress glaring inequalities in the distribution of wealth. The mass of the people are beginning to realise the enormous power which they possess through the extension of the franchise, and to make use of the new weapons placed in their hands. But the process of equalising wealth is one that brings strong temptation to all classes. The present owners of wealth and privilege are tempted to cling too tenaciously to their posses-

sions, to attach an exaggerated importance to vested interests, without regard to the common good. The masses are tempted to a greedy spoliation of their neighbours' property, neglecting existing rights, through a vindictive remembrance of ancient wrongs. A fixed, unalterable will to do justice, at any cost, is needed by both sides, and especially by those who, by virtue of their numbers, have supreme power in the State.

Character, then, is the most important element in any form of social life, and the improvement of character is the great task that lies before society. But it is not clear how this object can be attained. We have seen that modern democracy aims at a reduction of the present exaggerated inequality of possessions; not that it hopes for complete equality, for this is impossible, and if possible, would be both injurious and unjust. But it aims at a system in which monstrous and pernicious accumulations of wealth would be unknown. It also hopes to modify the present system of competition, and to substitute competition in excellence for the struggle for selfish gain. We have seen, also, that the modern protest against excessive inequality and unchecked competition is an ethical protest. The true ground of complaint is

that in each case the growth of character is hindered and perverted. Under such conditions, society will not attain its highest end, that is, will not allow its members to live the best life of which they are capable.

But even if Democracy succeeded in realising its aims—if wealth were more evenly distributed, and every member of society gained a fair reward for his work; if competition were moralised, and each man, instead of striving to gain the most for himself, could only strive to do his best—still the great problem of society would remain unsolved. Even if the State perfected the conditions of life, it would not therefore perfect the character of its citizens. Yet that is the prevalent heresy of modern democracy—that good external conditions will produce a good life. Listen to these words of Henry George: "With want destroyed; with greed changed to noble passions; with the fraternity that is born of equality taking the place of the jealousy and fear that now array men against each other; with mental power loosed by conditions that give to the humblest comfort and leisure—and who shall measure the heights to which our civilisation may soar? Words fail the thought! It is the Golden Age of which poets have sung and

high-raised seers have told in metaphor. It is the glorious vision which has always haunted man with gleams of fitful splendour. It is what he saw whose eyes at Patmos were closed in trance. It is the culmination of Christianity—the city of God on earth, with its walls of jasper and its gates of pearl. It is the reign of the Prince of Peace" (*Progress and Poverty*, p. 392). But what is the cause of this wondrous transformation? Simply a change in the ownership of land.

Or listen to Mr Blatchford: "Now, my lord, all vice is disease, and its origin may be traced as surely and removed as effectually as the origin of cholera or typhoid fever. Indeed, my lord, moral and physical diseases arise chiefly from the same cause, and that cause is the unhealthy environment of the people's lives." (Quoted in *Economic Review*, 1896, p. 472.)

These words are typical of the popular teaching of the day. Environment determines life; conditions mould character, and so the only reform needed is the reform of conditions. Improvement in character will necessarily follow. It is the modern and improved version of our Lord's teaching: "Seek ye first these things; and the kingdom of

God and His righteousness shall be added unto you."

We must consider more closely the relations between circumstances and character.

It is true, no doubt, that character can rise superior to conditions. "Stone walls do not a prison make," and the noblest lives have been lived under the most unfavourable circumstances. For a limited class, the effect of opposition is to strengthen and purify character.

Certainly the hero or the saint can rise above the conditions of his life. But we are not all heroes or saints, and for most men the force of circumstances is too strong. A German writer tells us a pathetic story. "In the hotel garden, beside the little fountain in the middle of the lawn, sat a ragged condor, attached to its perch by a good strong rope. But when the sun shone upon it with real warmth, it fell a-thinking of the snow peaks of Peru, of mighty wing-strokes over the deep valley, and then it forgot the rope. Two vigorous strokes with its pinions would bring the rope up taut, and it would fall back upon the sward. There it would lie by the hour, then shake itself and clamber up to its little perch again." (Quoted by E. F. Russell, *A Lent in*

London.) In human life there are cases where the tethered eagle has snapt his chain and taken his upward flight; but too often he ceases to dream of the distant hills, and learns to love his slavery.

It is true, also, that unfavourable natural conditions are not necessarily degrading. Men are made by their conflict with difficulty. The settler in the primeval forest, who has to wrestle with Nature for every foot of ground he occupies; the sailor exposed to the dangers of the deep; the explorer who takes his life in his hand as he goes through regions unknown; the dwellers in rigorous climates who face frost and snow during the long months of waiting—these are the men who develop courage, and patience, and tenacity of purpose. A virile character is created by obstacles. When we read history we see the same lesson taught on a large scale. Kidd has reminded us of the tendency of empire to move northward. The plains of Babylonia and Egypt, watered and fertilised by ever-flowing rivers, were the first homes of nations. But after a certain stage is reached, it is always from the North the invaders come. The Hittite, the Scythian, the Persian, the Roman appear in turn, till Rome becomes the centre of power. Then, when Rome decays, it is again from the North

the invaders come, who at last occupy her place. At the back of this persistent movement lies the strength developed by conflict with difficulties. The nations that settled and multiplied where Nature was lavish of her gifts have had to submit to the more sturdy stocks who found it hard to keep scarcity at bay. All this is true, but it serves to emphasise a distinction. The obstacles thrown in our way by Nature only serve to bring out what is best in us. But that is not the case with the obstacles caused by a defective social state. Set a man to fight against cold or famine and you strengthen his endurance and his manhood. "What do you grow on these bleak and barren coasts?" a New Englander was asked. "We grow men," was the reply. But make a man a slave, or take his property by fraud, or put him in a slum, and the result is very different. There seems to be a peculiar poison generated by human injustice. With one consent, workers in the East End of London tell us that a bad social environment is too strong for the average man. One witness before a Royal Commission says: "However clean people may be, if they go into Margaret Court, within six months they will be at the same level as most of the other people." Another says: "Many come to

us who have had proper training, but who are dragged down by the circumstances in which they are placed." Another draws this painful picture: "Imagine, for a moment, the common lot of our London poor. Ignorant and untrained minds, weary and unhealthy bodies, gloomy and demoralising environment, monotony and weariness of life—out of these evils spring the seeds of vice. Drudging in their vile stews day after day, night after night . . . . always with the black future, like an ominous cloud, casting its chill shadow on their anxious hearts; always with the mean walls hemming them in, and the mean tasks wearing them down, and the mean life paralysing their sick souls; with no pleasure but drink; with no club but the public-house; with work precarious and wages low; in hateful and cheerless surroundings, and with faint hopes ever narrowing, the toiling millions bring their own bodies and bewildered souls to fight against the devil and all his works, and the devil, amongst other weapons, uses gin. Out in the horrible East, the women drink. What wonder! If you go amongst these poor women, you will feel suddenly stricken old. . . . What culture have these poor creatures ever known? What teaching have they had? What dowry of

love, of joy, of sweet and fair imagination? Think what their lives are; think what their homes are; think of the darkness and confusion of their minds; and then say, Is it a marvel if they take to gin?" (Quoted in *Church Commonwealth*, 1899, p. 150.) No; it would be a marvel if they did not. The really fatal element in all this slum life is the destruction of the home. The home is meant, in God's wisdom, to be the training-ground of character. In the family we see our own personality respected, and we learn to respect the personality of others. There we get example and training. There we learn the meaning of duty and love, and purity and sacrifice. There we get opportunities for rest and happiness. There we accumulate associations and memories that strengthen us through all our later life. But if the home is destroyed, there are few exceptions to the general deterioration of character.

We may grant, then, that the exceptional man is not controlled by his surroundings; we may grant, also, that natural obstacles have a bracing effect upon character. But it remains true that there are certain forms of social environment which have an irresistible influence for evil upon the moral life of the average man. May we go further, and draw the obvious

inference, that if we improve the environment we create an equally potent influence for good?

Unfortunately, this is not true. A perfect environment will not make a perfect character.

When we consider the lowest form of environment, the material conditions under which we live, it is clear that these have a merely negative effect upon morals. Overwork and starve a man, and you may possibly make him a criminal. But no amount of leisure, no abundance of food and clothing, will make him a saint. You can remove the hindrance to morality and give it opportunity to develop, but you cannot nourish morality on material surroundings. Even when we turn to the higher form, the psychical environment, we find there is still a lack of power. We may supply the mind with the noblest ideas of truth and right, with the most convincing arguments, with the most splendid examples. We may expose the life to the unconscious influence of the best men. But all this may utterly fail. The moral life consists in the decisions of the will. We can only supply some of the motives from which the will can choose, and the will may choose wrongly. We can give a wider field for choice, but we cannot enforce a right choice.

These facts must be remembered when we consider how far the State can promote morality by touching the conditions of life. Bad material surroundings have a great influence for evil, but the very best material surroundings have not a corresponding influence for good. They may destroy the moral life, but they cannot create it or build it up. And even the psychical surroundings can only supply motives from which the will can choose. They cannot control the choice.

What, then, can the State do for morals? Experience teaches that it cannot produce morality by compulsion. Calvin at Geneva, Savonarola in Florence, the Puritans in New England are amongst those who have tried and failed. And the teaching of experience is reinforced by reason. In popular thought, a moral life is simply a series of good actions, or at least of actions that are not evil in their effects. The motive cannot be detected, and so counts for nothing. But in reality the morality of an action depends entirely on its motive. Now, compulsion can cause actions that are consistent with morality, but these are not necessarily based on motives that are moral. I may be compelled by law to give a tenth of my income to the poor, and yet in the forced gift

there may be no spark of love. In fact, compulsion makes it less likely that good motives will inspire my action. It brings fear and self-interest into operation, and so far checks the working of those higher impulses which alone are moral. In the case suggested, my own nature might have impelled me to be liberal; but my spontaneous generosity is likely to be chilled when I am paying a compulsory tax. So, through the action of the State, I may be compelled to keep sober. But though the outward result is the same, enforced sobriety is not moral self-control. The compulsion may actually weaken character, for it renders the acquirement of self-control in this direction unnecessary. "I would rather see England free than sober by Act of Parliament" was a startling statement; but the good Bishop's aspiration was based on a true theory of morals.

But though the State cannot compel morality, it is by no means without influence. For one thing, it can remove obstacles; or, to use the phrase preferred by Bosanquet, the State can hinder hindrances to morality. We have seen, for example, that extreme poverty has certain moral dangers inseparably connected with it. There is the overcrowding, with the consequent blunting of the sense of decency; the

weakening of the influences of the home; the loss of self-respect; the absorption in the merely animal side of life; and the growth of envy. These are obstacles to the full growth of the moral life, and, in the case of ordinary men, insuperable obstacles. Now the State, by prohibiting some forms of sweating and relieving the stress of poverty, removes these obstacles, and makes it easier for morality to develop. So the State can fix the hours of labour, and put a stop to that complete absorption of energy which hinders the growth of a higher life. It is also within the powers of the State to limit certain forms of temptation. It can prohibit the public sale of indecent literature and pictures. It can reduce the number of public-houses and regulate the sale of drink. It can lessen the incitement to gambling by forbidding the publication of odds or the establishment of gaming-houses. In these and many other ways it can hinder hindrances to morality, and make it less difficult for the citizen to do right. Of course, in all this there is no direct stimulus to morality. All the hindrances to a moral life might be removed, yet there is no guarantee that a moral life would be lived. The labourer might be saved from poverty and spend his wages in self-indulgence. He might

have abundant leisure and devote it to folly. He might be kept sober and become selfish. The man who had no wish to live rightly would remain immoral. But if State action could do no more than make a moral life less difficult, we should thankfully accept its help.

But the State has a further power in this direction. It can place a citizen or a class of citizens in a new psychical environment which is favourable to morality. Take the case of a neglected boy in a city slum. His home is the street. He has become the associate of thieves. Left to himself, he will almost certainly become a criminal through the influence of his surroundings. But the State hands him over to a home for neglected children. Not only are his material surroundings changed for the better, and obstacles to morality thus removed, but he is introduced to a world of different ideas. He breathes an atmosphere of unvarying kindness and belief in his capacity for goodness. He is trained in morality and taught about religion. In his new position he will probably become a useful member of society, and the change is due to the action of the State. But notice what the State really does. It has not directly influenced the boy's moral life.

It has not created either the old or the new environment. But it has removed the boy from an environment which is dangerous, to one which is helpful.

The same thing takes place when the State secures for a class of workers higher wages, or shorter hours, or extended political rights. The higher wage exchanges the mean, uncomfortable hovel for a home where a fuller family life may exert its silent influence. The man who formerly left his twelve or fourteen hours' work with every power exhausted, now finds himself retaining some energy and possessed of some leisure, which he may devote to recreation or study. The member of the State who had no influence, and therefore no interest in political life, now finds himself with all the responsibilities of a voter, forced to inform himself and to decide on great public questions, and influenced by all the ideas and forces which mould the life of nations. In each case the psychical environment has been changed, and the character affected by new sets of motives.

This kind of action—the introduction of citizens into a better psychical environment—is seen on a large scale in the system of public education. The moral value of education does not consist in the sharpening

of the intellect, but in the exposure of the character to the influence of a wider range of ideas and motives. The mere power of reading unlocks all the treasures of literature; and though the average man does not read the hundred best books, yet in the second, or third, or fourth-rate author, or in the daily paper, he gets the reflection and the influence of the great thoughts of all ages. He is surrounded by a new set of ideas which have no existence for the ignorant. Patriotism, the sense of duty, religion—all the forces that make a man are reinforced by new motives and new arguments. The educated man lives in a different world from his ignorant brother. Thus the inner meaning of State education is, that the State transfers the great body of citizens from an environment which is comparatively devoid of intellectual and moral stimulus to an environment which abounds with motives and forces making for a better life.

So is it when the State encourages Art by the purchase and exhibition of pictures. The highest justification for the expenditure is to be found in the fact that it places the citizen in a more helpful environment. It brings him face to face with an interpretation of the seen and temporal, through which he

may discern the eternal. It opens his faculties to the message of a divine truth and beauty, half concealed and half revealed by the common things of life. In all these directions there is room for far more generous and energetic action than is found to-day. The fact that circumstances may, and do, degrade character, imposes on every one of us an obligation to improve, as far as may be, the conditions of life for our neighbours. Our brother's blood will be on us and on our children if we allow him to live amidst surroundings that kill his moral life, or if we deprive him of those helps to morality that we might have provided. And the curse will fall more heavily if we try to shelter ourselves behind the hypocritical plea that character is independent of conditions. It is true that conditions cannot make character, but it does not follow that they count for nothing. They have no creative power, but we have seen that they have a great influence for good, and a still greater influence for destruction.

So much, then, the State can do. It can hinder some of the forces which obstruct morality; and it can remove some of its citizens to an environment which is more helpful to the growth of character. But, even so, it cannot make good citizens. For one

thing, the environment which it can use is never wholly good. Suppose that, by wise statesmanship, the material surroundings of our life had been perfected; that each man had his three acres and a cow, and an income large enough to give him a healthy and a cultured life. Still, the psychical surroundings are imperfect. The best available environment is of a very mixed character. Evil is blended with the good. High moral teaching, the memory of golden deeds and heroic lives, the example of patriots and saints in the past, the influence of good men and women in the present—all this comes to us mingled with worldly principles, and vicious actions, and base thoughts. After all, the environment is practically the average life and thought of our neighbours, and its influence cannot raise us above that average. Take, for instance, the life of an ordinary middle-class citizen. You have there the surroundings, material and psychical, that seem peculiarly favourable for morality.

There are no extremes of poverty to stunt character, or of wealth to corrupt it. Through education, the teachings of the great and good in every age are brought to bear on the mind; the avowed principles of the neighbours are excellent. Every motive and

influence for good is within the reach of all. Yet the result of all these influences is not a perfect character; it is the character of a middle-class citizen, and that is far from perfect.[1]

And we must go further. Even if the psychical environment were perfect, it would not produce good citizens. For morality consists in the free choice of good by the will, and we have no reason to believe that the citizen would always choose good. All the State can do is to give scope and breathing-space to native virtue; but if the native virtue is lacking or imperfect, no State-created conditions can supply the defect. "There is no political alchemy by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts"; and in man, as we know him, we must recognise the presence of the baser metal.

[1] We must remember this when interpreting certain social statistics. Professor Ely, for example, speaking of rescue work amongst children in America, states that nine out of ten are saved by a change in their surroundings. It is splendid testimony to the value and efficiency of the work done, but we must be careful to understand its meaning. The nine who are saved are saved from becoming criminals. The new conditions raise them to a higher level, but it is only the level of respectability, and respectability is not perfection. The influence of favourable conditions can never be exerted above its own level. Characters may rise above that level; but if so, it is due to the operation of other forces.

Some will remember the parable of the rose-bush in Bellamy's *Looking Backward.* Humanity is compared to a rose-bush, "planted in a swamp, watered with black bog-water, breathing miasmatic fogs by day and chilled with poison dews at night. Innumerable generations of gardeners had done their best to make it bloom, but, beyond an occasional half-opened bud with a worm at the heart, their efforts had been unsuccessful." But at last "the rose-bush of humanity was transplanted, and set in sweet, warm, dry earth, where the sun bathed it, the stars wooed it, and the south wind caressed it. Then the vermin and the mildew disappeared, and the bush was covered with most beautiful red roses, whose fragrance filled the world."

Here you find expressed the cardinal error of the merely secular politician. Perfect the conditions, and he thinks human nature will be perfected. But the Christian believes that human nature is diseased, though not incapable of cure. The rose-bush is at fault as well as its surroundings. Let the soil be as rich and fruitful as you will; feed it with material things in abundance; let the air be full of the warmth and movement of great ideas, yet there is a blight which will yield to none but a divine remedy. The

fact of sin is too obvious to be overlooked or explained away. There is no need to insist on the theological explanation of this fact; we need not discuss its origin or its transmission. From the social point of view, we need only recognise in all the history of the race a persistent warping of the will, which has disturbed the course of human evolution.

It is this fact of sin that, sooner or later, blocks the way to all human Utopias.

> "Ah! your Fouriers failed
> Because not poets enough to understand
> That life develops from within."

And if the inner life be tainted, we must expect disease and defect in the outward expression. We cannot make our surroundings perfect, for they depend on the lives and thoughts of sinful men.

And even if our surroundings were perfect, even if man were back in Paradise without the serpent, he could not be trusted to offer unswerving obedience to the higher law. The city of God that St John saw in his vision of the future is still the one sure hope for the human race. But into that city can come nothing that defileth. It is not the perfect conditions that will make men clean. The purification must come

before entrance. Men are not to be made perfect by walking in those streets of gold, or dwelling in the light of the divine glory. They must be freed from evil by the grace of God before they can find a home in a perfect society.

VII

DEMOCRACY AND CHRISTIANITY

Rev. xi. 15: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

The debt that Democracy owes to Christianity cannot be overestimated. We have seen that the fundamental principles of Democracy are essentially Christian. Respect for human nature finds its ultimate justification in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. The nature which the Son of God assumed; for whose redemption He thought it worth while to die; which He perfected in connection with His own person; and which will at last be perfected in every one of His followers, has a title to honour and consideration which could not be supplied by either history or science. The essential equality of man seems contradicted by the obvious inequality of gifts and powers; but it is supported by the Christian doctrine of a Divine Love which goes out to each

individual with the same intensity, and of a human duty which, though different in every case in its direction, is alike in all cases in its obligation. The doctrine of human brotherhood finds its only secure basis in the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood. The limitations of class, or nation, or feeling are swept away by the belief in a family which is world-wide, and includes the living and the dead.

Not only do the principles of Democracy find their support and justification in Christianity, but the Christian Church has always been, even if unconsciously or unwillingly, the strongest ally of Democracy. We see her influence in the overthrow of slavery in the Roman empire; in the humane legislation of the early centuries of this era; in the defence of popular rights by Catholicism in the Middle Ages. Many of the movements which are classed as religious were the outcome of the spirit of Democracy, supported by religion. The Peasant revolt of Germany based its demands on the Bible, and offered to surrender any demand which could be proved to contradict the Christian teaching. Francis of Assisi, Wiclif, Hus, Savonarola may be looked upon as social as well as religious reformers. The Reformation and the Puritan movement, each in its

own way, helped to establish democratic principles; and it is not too much to say that modern Democracy owes all that is best in its teaching and all that is lasting in its success to the Christian Church.

Yet we find at the present day a distinct separation between the working classes and the Church. On the Continent of Europe the separation has developed into opposition. It would be easy to multiply quotations in which, not only the Church, but religion and God are reviled. Lecky quotes from one French exponent of Socialism: "God is dying without posterity; the terrestrial despot will drag down in his fall the celestial bugbear. Religion is an engine of domination" (Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, ii. p. 287).

Brooks quotes from German leaders: "It is our duty as Socialists to root out the faith in God with all our zeal, nor is any one worthy of the name who does not consecrate himself to the spread of atheism." "We open war upon God, because He is the greatest evil in the world." But Brooks points out the fact that Lecky omits to mention, that these statements are typical of the Continental Socialism of twenty-five years ago, and not of to-day. Hostility to religion was connected with a materialistic philosophy, then

popular, but now moribund. The leaders of the Social movement in Germany and France—men like Anatole France, Jaurès, and Bernstein—have come to see that religion cannot be killed by opposition, cannot even be ignored as a social factor. In authorised manifestoes, religion is left to the judgment of the individual. In the writings of many Socialistic teachers, it is now recognised as a persistent and necessary element in human life.

In English-speaking countries, hostility to religion is rare. The working classes are not irreligious; they are merely out of sympathy with the Church. We are told of England: "The poor are always religious, even to superstition. No one who works amongst them can doubt it. There is little agnosticism, still less deliberate atheism amongst them. The secular movement of fifty years ago never touched their imagination or their hearts; it was certainly never in possession of the labouring poor. And that movement is now dead, if not buried." "Most of the workmen and workwomen of our country do believe in Christ," says Mr Will Crookes. "Christianity is not assailed but by Christians, and nowhere is a word breathed against Christ," says Mr George Haw. Similar testimony comes from America,

and is echoed in Australia. We have certainly had painful and blasphemous outbursts in some of our labour newspapers, but the mass of the workers in our midst retain a firm belief in God, and a respect for Christ which is akin to reverence. Their belief may be hazy and fall short of the fulness of the Christian faith, but it is a misuse of terms to call them irreligious.

Yet, as a whole, they may be said to keep aloof from organised Christian bodies. This is shown not only by their absence from Church services, but by the fact that in their political and social struggles the help of any branch of the Church is seldom asked for, and the help that is offered is regarded with disfavour and suspicion. The working classes welcome the social doctrines of Christianity. They aim at the justice, the liberty, the brotherhood which would result from Christian life. But they have no use for the Christian Church.

But if it be true that Christianity established the principles of democracy on a firm basis, and that the success of democracy is due to Christian influence, how can we explain the modern divorce between the Church and the democratic movement?

Partly, it is due to the want of earnestness and

reality in the Christian life. It is obvious enough that some Christians deny their creed by their conduct, that many show a bewildering inconsistency of life, that all live far below the level to which their religion calls them. Now the working classes, so recently made full members of the State, and so recently granted the benefits of education, share in some of the qualities of youth. They have the same clearness of moral vision, unspoilt by traditional explanations and evasions; and they have the same pitiless, unsparing severity of criticism. The broad distinctions between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, appeal to them; of all classes, they are the least likely to take light for darkness, or darkness for light; but they are impatient of mixed motives and compromises, and can make little allowance for discrepancies between profession and practice. It is natural for them to jump to the conclusion that Christian men who are not wholly under the influence of religion are altogether insincere.

A second reason for the indifference of the working man is found in the identification of the Church with the middle-class or the rich. It is, of course, true that the Church has done much for the relief of the needy. She has inspired and organised charity. Although by

the system of pew-rents she has discouraged the attendance of the poor at her services, yet, if they persist in coming, they are welcomed. She has made great efforts to reach them by special agencies, mission services, settlements, and the like. She has visited, advised, rebuked, consoled. In this sense she may claim to be the Church of the poor. But though her work is mainly amongst the poor, though in theory she admits all, and treats all on a footing of perfect equality, yet her officials are, as a rule, in close connection with the well-to-do. The clergy, even when they are taken from the labouring class, by the very fact of their education become aliens in sentiment and habit. Their friends and their recreations are found in another sphere of life; and however intense their devotion to the cause of labour, they are regarded as visitors, if not intruders, within the workers' brotherhood. Even in a democratic country, lay officials are of the same character. A return showing the number of members of synods and members of vestries in Australia who are manual workers would be both startling and saddening.

The attitude of the Church towards labour movements in the past is a third cause of the attitude of labour towards the Church. The working man reads

the history of the greater part of last century, and he looks in vain for evidence of ecclesiastical sympathy with his aspirations or his struggles. The Reform Bills were not blessed by the Bishops. Joseph Arch was denounced. Not only the methods, but the aims of Chartism were preached against. Trades-unions found few advocates. Even Factory Acts had not a tithe of the ecclesiastical support which they deserved. And all these movements originated outside the Church, and asked only, and asked vainly, for her sympathy. Where are the social reforms due to the Church as an organised body—movements in favour of justice, or freedom, or humanity? We may, of course, point to splendid examples of individual teachers who advocated reform with all their heart and soul. But the names of such men as Maurice and Kingsley only make more noticeable the apathy of the whole body. The working man may not unreasonably say, "Here is a church which teaches the duty of justice, and yet made no effort to secure justice in social relations; which teaches that love is the fundamental virtue, and yet allowed a system of absolutely selfish competition to be maintained without protest; which teaches brotherhood, but says not a word against exclusive privilege

and monopolies; which teaches that all men are essentially equal, and yet acquiesces in a system which makes one class continually dependent on another."

It is a severe judgment, but much might be urged in mitigation. As we have just seen, the working classes share in some of the defects of youth. Not only are they merciless in criticism, but they are impatient of slow and indirect processes. For this reason they cannot do justice to a Church whose best work in influencing social life is both slow and indirect. It would be easy for her to denounce abuses; it is a harder and yet more useful task to train character so that abuses become impossible. Under the Roman empire the Christian Church made no direct attack upon slavery. The slaves might reasonably have complained that the Christian teachers were dumb, and might have ascribed their silence to cowardice, or to sympathy with the slaveowners. But through those years of seeming indifference to social wrongs, the spirit of brotherhood was so fostered that the whole system of slavery crumbled rapidly away. A section of Kidd's book on *Social Evolution* is devoted to showing how the unconscious influence of Christianity made reforms possible. He

points out that in conflicts between classes, the victory is won not so much through the strength of the attack as through the weakness of the defence. The rich and the powerful have lived in a Christian atmosphere, and this has undermined their position. They have ceased to be absolutely selfish; they have begun to doubt the justice of their monopoly; they have learned sympathy with the claims of the less privileged within their defences; they have admitted Christian altruism, and this has turned traitor to their cause. They can only fight feebly, or, it may be, surrender at the first onset. Kidd takes the French Revolution as an illustration. The nobility were in partial sympathy with humanitarian ideas, and it was in their hearts, and not in the streets, that the cause of the people was won. In Japan we may find a similar case. The surrender of power by the feudal classes was not forced upon them, but was the result of a change of idea amongst themselves. Possibly the regeneration of Russia may follow the same course, and the necessity for a bloody uprising of the masses be obviated by the moral education of the nobility.

So with other social and political reforms in Christendom. They have succeeded, and they will

succeed, because the power-holding classes have been affected by the altruism which is the necessary product of the Christian religion. The men who are defending privilege can no longer fight with a whole-hearted devotion to what they call their rights. They are more responsive to the rights of others, more sensitive to their wrongs, and some at least of their own party openly proclaim the duty of surrender.

If we consider the last century, although the voice of the Church was seldom heard in opposition to social injustice, yet the influence of the Church was on the side of justice. By its quiet methods, by its sacraments of grace, by its regular teaching, by its holding up the character of Christ as the ideal for all men, it made men more unselfish; and just in so far as it succeeded in this, it made reform easier. Some it inspired to be champions of the new chivalry which fights as of old for the succour of the oppressed. In all cases it undermined the defences of injustice. The employer might be in the grip of a bad system which he was powerless to alter; the middle-class citizen might find himself possessed of privileges unearned by himself and denied to others; but as they became better Christians, they would listen with more sympathy to complaints, and show more

readiness to meet the insistent claims of the less fortunate. No doubt the working classes are right in saying that the Church as a corporate body should aid social reform; but they forget that whenever the Church helps any citizen to be more like Christ, it has made him more in sympathy with reform and more likely to be an active supporter of reform.

They forget also that the path to effective reform is seldom clear. Here again we meet with the defects of youth. There is no appreciation of the complexity of social life; of the difficulties involved in reconstruction; of the far-reaching effects of change. It seems so easy to arrange human institutions at will. But wider knowledge and longer experience show that change does not always mean improvement, and that reform never brings exactly the result at which it aimed. The Church, we are told, should lead, if she be true to her principles, but she is not bound to lead a mere search-party. A Christian must be profoundly dissatisfied with the present social system, but it does not follow that he should work for the particular scheme of social salvation which happens to be popular in his day. History shows us how scheme after scheme is brought forward for the reconstruction of society. The majority find the broad path that

leads to oblivion. The few that are tried attain but a qualified success. And the thoughtful man, with the best intentions in the world, may hesitate long before committing himself to any specific proposal. Co-operation, State interference, land nationalisation, socialism, anarchism—all are strenuously advocated. But brave words and high hopes do not always carry conviction, and want of certainty as to the best method should not be confused with unwillingness to help reform.

But, after allowing consideration to all these pleas, we must admit that there is too much excuse for the alienation of the working classes from the Church. In the past she has shown herself too timid, too conservative. She has allowed herself, in her government, to become identified with the privileged classes. She has been silent in the face of abuses, unsympathetic in the presence of reforms. She has not been faithful in the preaching of social righteousness. Her leaders have shown a caution which may be called cowardice, and a prudence which hardly differs from worldly expediency.

Fortunately, there are signs of change in her attitude. There may seem at first sight to be little connection between the study of the Greek Fathers

and the establishment of wages boards and old age pensions; but it is perfectly true that the study of Greek theology has been one of the main factors in the awakening of the Church to social needs and problems. The Greek Fathers make the Incarnation the central truth of their theology; and the Incarnation involves the consecration and redemption of the social order. All that touches man's life becomes invested with a new dignity and a new hope. The renewed study of the union between man and God has naturally led the Church to consider the conditions under which man at present lives, and the conditions which may best help him to realise his potential greatness. At the present day we find in every branch of the Church a sincere sympathy with the aspirations of the masses, a pathetic eagerness to understand their problems, and a somewhat feverish enthusiasm in the righting of their wrongs. The Lambeth Report on Industrial Problems of 1897 recognises "that there has been a marked increase of solicitude about the problems of industrial and social life, and of sympathy with the struggles, sufferings, responsibilities, and anxieties which those problems involve."

The Convocation of Canterbury in 1907 resolved:

"That more attention should be given in the public teaching of the Church to the obligation resting on all Christians to apply in practice the principles of the Gospel as to the duty of the Christian to his neighbour, with special reference to the moral character of the actual conditions of industrial life." Social questions take a prominent place in every Church congress. We find men like Bishop Westcott and Bishop Gore going to the root of our social discontent, and applying revolutionary Christian principles to our common life with a courage and an honesty which win respect from the most conservative. Bishops, clergy, and laity alike are waking up to the fact that our present social system is not Christian, and that it is the duty of the Church to make it Christian. It is a refreshing change of attitude, and we may hope that it will lead to a corresponding change in the attitude of the people towards the Church; for Democracy has no future unless it allies itself with Christianity. To use Mazzini's oft-quoted words: "Great social transformations have never been and never will be other than the application of a religious principle, of a moral development, of a strong and active common faith. On the day when Democracy shall elevate itself to the position of a

religious party, it will carry away the victory, *not before.*"

If we go into details, we shall see the imperative need of this alliance with religion. Take the great social needs which have emerged in the course of this discussion. We have seen that democracy lays upon each citizen the burden of moral judgment on national questions. How can we better learn to discharge this duty than listening to a religion which makes an instructed conscience the guide of each man's life? The spirit of selfish competition has taken hold of us, and the strangling clutch must be loosened. What more effective weapon than the teaching of the Gospel of Christ, which insists on brotherhood, and makes sacrifice greater than success? Or where shall we learn the spirit of independence better than from Him who stood unmoved before tyrannical authority and hostile public opinion? Where can we get deeper teaching as to the duty and value of public service than from Him who gave His life for the many?

Then, again, religion is needed to correct and spiritualise the ideals of democracy. During the last century the growth of industry and commerce, and the consequent flow of wealth, have materialised the

life of all Western nations. The commercial spirit which weighs and measures all things by the standard of money has grown apace, and certainly we in Australia have suffered by its growth. We have had more than our share of easily acquired wealth, and we have nothing in our history to counteract its influence. Other nations have their records of heroism. England has her long line of patriots. Even America can point to the Pilgrim Fathers, and the War of Independence, and the Civil War, in which money and life were lavished in defence of a great idea. But we have nothing of the kind as yet. The one important event in our history is the discovery of gold. The records that feed our pride are the statistics of wealth production. Is it any wonder that material prosperity and comfort occupy a disproportionate place in our estimates of the value of life?[1] Yet a nation's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that it possesses. Long ago Carthage attained her heart's desire. She gained

[1] A few years ago the inhabitants of an Australian mining town were fired with the ambition to improve their church. It was decided to add a spire. After long deliberation, plans were prepared for a structure which in size and *colour* should represent the amount of gold produced in the district; and there it stands to this day, a silent witness to the ruling passion of the people.

wealth in abundance. She adopted the modern financial expedients of foreign loans and the credit system. She became so rich that her citizens paid no taxes. As Mommsen says: "If government had resolved itself into a mere matter of business, never would any State have solved the problem more brilliantly than Carthage." Yet she fell speedily and perished utterly because her wealth had killed her life. She left behind no legacy of art or literature; no thoughts that breathe or words that burn, no single influence for good, no record of heroic deeds, save those of one family; nothing but the memory of the attainment of a material ideal. Above all other nations we need the warning of her fatal success, for there is no country where material ideals are more in evidence than in Australia. More money, shorter hours of work, more comfort—these are the common aims of all classes. So far as they are the only aims, they result in a degradation of character. So far as they are the only gains, they cause that most essential loss, "the inner poverty which touches not the circumstances of life, but the powers of life" (Westcott). Even when the ideals of our time are higher, they seldom rise above the possession of rights by individuals or by classes. It

is an ideal which has abundantly proved its power. Persuade a man that he is unjustly treated, and you have forged a potent weapon for destruction. Servile wars, Peasant insurrections, French revolutions accompany the proclamation of rights. But it is not an integrating force. The hot blast of selfish claims to privilege or power may dissolve the bonds of society, but it does not weld them together. Nor can an ideal which goes no further ever make the best of men.

But both these imperfect hopes—the hope of material betterment, and the hope of the rights of men—can be ennobled. To the man who has set his heart on wealth, Christianity teaches the true place of the material. It can express life, it can minister to life, but it is not life. Wealth is not to be despised, but, after all, it is far less important than the man who produces it, or the man who uses it. It may nourish the body; it may foster art or knowledge; it may give opportunity for sacrifice. But it is the life, the character, that counts. And it is the life, the character, that will be judged. These material things we crave for, even if we gain them, can never be our own. We are but stewards, entrusted with these things for the common good, and certain to be called to strict account for the way they have been used.

It may seem hopeless to preach such a doctrine to a commercial age. Probably the spirit of every age has seemed invincible in the hour of its supremacy. But the history of our faith is the record of a long series of victories over foes that seemed invincible.

Then, to the ideal of human rights, Christianity adds the higher ideal of human duties, and this includes the lower. A man's strongest claims to rights lie in the fact that, if they are granted, he will be enabled to do his duty. Every man finds himself confronted with the duty of serving the community to the fullest extent of his powers, and he claims his rights, not that he may enjoy them, but that he may fulfil his obligations. He has a right to free speech only that he may speak for the common good. He has a right to freedom of thought, so that his thinking may help the community. He has a right to vote, because he may vote wisely. A right is only valuable, or, to go further, a right only exists, because it makes the fulfilment of duty possible.[1]

But although the belief in natural duty is a nobler and more fruitful conception than that of natural

[1] "A right is a power of acting for his own ends, for what he conceives to be his good, secured to an individual by the community, on the supposition that its exercise contributes to the good of the community."—T. H. GREEN, *Political Obligation*, section 208.

right, it lays a greater strain on human nature, and, apart from religion, failure is likely to follow. Duty is one of the great watchwords of our Anglo-Saxon race; but it has always been based on faith in a Living God, and supported by the example and inspiration of His Son. There is little hope that its appeal would be so strong and so successful if faith in God were replaced by a respect for public opinion, even if it represented the accumulated experience of all the ages of the past.

But though we may take for granted that Christianity can supply the principles and the motives for social regeneration, the objection may be raised that it is unfair to say that Christianity is the only force adequate for this purpose. No doubt, history confirms the truth of Seeley's dictum: "I always hold that religion is the great state-building principle . . . the Church, so at least I hold, is the soul of the state; where there is a church, a state grows up in time; but if you find a state which is not also in some sense a church, you find a state which is not long for this world"; or, to adopt a briefer expression of the same truth, "Religion is a sociological necessity."[1]

[1] "Thus we see that religion is still a force in society which has not yet lost all its old vitality. And if the religious spirit has

But why define religion in a narrow sense? From a social point of view, the essential thing about it is an ideal and a sanction which go beyond the individual life, and these have been found in other forms of religion than Christianity. The worship of the emperor was the integrating social force for the Romans. The faith of Mahommedans has proved equally effective. Mere patriotism may take the place of a supernatural religion. And in Japan we have a striking proof that religion, as it is commonly interpreted, is not essential as a cause of cohesion in the nation and as an inspiration of heroic sacrifice.

survived all the storms and all the attacks which have been directed against it; if those who are most eager, either to supersede it by some new Positivist ideal, or to weaken it in one way or another, are compelled finally to arrive at the very point they were seeking to avoid; if the French Revolution, which turned the churches into banqueting halls and declared war to the knife against Christianity, was forced to invent a new religion, the so-called Religion of Virtue, to take its place; if the modern State, having declared that it ignores all religion, is nevertheless forced to fall back on the religion of patriotism, and to substitute itself for the Deity it has dethroned; if a great intelligence like that of Auguste Comte is forced to end up by making a religion the basis of his Positivist system; if every great philosopher who seeks to give a value to the ideal of life is forced to go beyond life in order to find that value—after all this, we may reasonably see in the *besoin de croire*, as Brunetière has called it, in the 'need to believe,' some justification for the view that *religion is a sociological necessity.*"—CHATTERTON HILL, *Heredity and Selection*, p. 515.

The system known as "Bushido," so strange to our Western minds, so opposed to our Western ideas, is not what we should call a religion; it has no supernatural sanctions, though it preaches high morality with a religious fervour. Yet experience shows that this system is effective. In times of the greatest stress, it has given to the Japanese people a power of sacrifice for patriotic ends, and of brave and patient endurance, which has been excelled by no Western nation. In the face of these facts, why should we suppose that one particular form of supernatural religion is essential to the stability of democracy?

We must remember, in the first place, that although there are many varieties of supernatural religions, yet, as far as our own nation is concerned, only one form of religion is possible. Christianity may be neglected by the races which now profess it, but it is not likely to be superseded by any existing rival. As an abstract question, we might discuss the power of Mahommedanism to inspire an Anglo-Saxon state, but the point is one that will never be tested in practice, and may be left out of consideration.

But are there no possible substitutes for a supernatural religion? Cannot patriotism or the religion

of humanity, or some Western form of "Bushido," supply sufficient motive power for social life? This is a more pressing question. There are great souls who have found their inspiration in beliefs and ideals which were not avowedly Christian. To-day there are thousands who find in the thought of a coming Socialism an incentive to work and suffer. But such cases do not prove that Christianity may be dispensed with as a social factor. Devotion to public duty and enthusiasm for public service are in great measure derived from Christian inheritance and Christian environment, even when professedly based on merely patriotic ideals.

We are told that it takes three generations to get Christianity out of the blood, and it will take more than three to get it out of the social atmosphere; and if the process were complete, we have no guarantee that an atmosphere purged of all religious thought and motive would be the most favourable to social morals. So far as we can judge, the substitutes for Christianity owe most of their power to the religion they deny.

Besides this, Christianity contains all that these substitutes contain. The belief in humanity, the love of one's brethren, the desire to succour the distressed,

the vision of a perfect social state, are found in the Christian religion more fully and more clearly than in any religion of humanity. The charge generally made against Christians is not that their creed is defective, but that it is in favour of popular demands, and that those who hold it are too selfish or too cowardly to put their creed into practice. This may prove that a change of heart is needed, but it is no argument in favour of a change of creed.

But the final answer is that Christianity contains more than any of its substitutes. We are always in danger of accepting the secular estimate of our religion, and supposing that it supplies nothing more than high examples and ideals. It does put forward the Highest Example and cherish the most exalted ideals, but its strength lies in the fact that it is a religion of grace. In man there are no new resources of strength. In union with Christ, he finds divine power at his disposal. This is the fact that makes it the one true religion of humanity. It recognises the fact of sin, and the consequent weakness of human nature, and supplies a supernatural power adequate for recovery. Its strength lies in the constant impartation of the grace, the life of Christ to its members. It is a persistent intrusion of the supernatural into human life.

This is the factor that historians forget. Lecky tells us in his *History of European Morals*: "It may truly be said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and than all the exhortations of moralists. This has been the wellspring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft, the persecution and fanaticism which have defaced the Church, it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration." Lecky is right as to the effects, but he makes an inaccurate statement of the cause. It is not the Example, it is the Life which has regenerated mankind. In Kidd's *Social Evolution* there is the same defect. He has described the social significance of the altruism which was born into the world with the Christian religion; and he tells us how character was "deepened and softened by being brought into close and intimate contact with those wonderfully moving and impressive altruistic ideals which we have in the simple story of the life and acts of the Founder of Christianity." But it is not contact with altruistic ideals, it is the grace which acts directly on human character which

is the main factor in the work of Christianity. In a recent work by Chatterton Hill (*Heredity and Selection in Sociology*), the neglect of this element is still more surprising. He shows the paramount importance of religion as a social factor, in deepening the value of life and in supplying an adequate sanction for man's actions. He accepts the Christian religion as the only possible religion for the Western world, and the Catholic Church as the most effective expression of religion. But throughout the whole discussion there is not a word to suggest that Christianity has any direct influence upon character apart from its ideals. Yet this is the very point in which Christianity differs from every other form of religion, and in which it excels all its substitutes, that it counteracts the anti-social tendencies of selfishness and vice, not merely by teaching, but directly by the gift of grace.

The best hope of Democracy, then, lies in its alliance with Christianity. An irreligious democracy carries within it the seeds of disunion and dissolution. Its ideals will be of the earth, earthy. It will have no sufficient stimulus to service and self-sacrifice; no sufficient motive for costly independence; no sufficient check against despotic tyranny; no sufficient remedy for man's inherent weakness and selfishness. In the

Christian religion alone will be found the necessary inspiration and safeguards.

But Democracy can be satisfied with nothing less than Christianity in all its fulness. It must be a religion of genuine earnestness and sincerity; a religion which makes no compromise in its claims upon its members; which is not satisfied with insincere professions and conventional conduct; which demands a real self-sacrifice and a real self-control from rich and poor alike.

Then it must be a social Christianity, not undervaluing personal piety, but recognising that personal piety must find expression in social and political relations. If a man aspires to be a Christian saint to-day, he cannot be content with a life of inner devotion. That is essential, but not sufficient. He must live as a saint in his public life just as much as in his thoughts and prayers. He must cease to be grasping and overbearing in his business; he must look into the sources from which his income is derived; he must refuse to profit at the expense of any other man's pocket, or health, or character. He can no longer wink at abuses because they are profitable to his class, or because their removal would mean trouble. He can no longer neglect to vote at elec-

tions because it interferes with his comfort or his trade. He must do his best to improve the social environment, so that it may be easier for his neighbour to do right. Christianity aims at making all men saints; but the Church is learning at last that a saint who is indifferent to the lives of his fellow-men is probably an impostor.

And it must be a dogmatic and sacramental religion. What is called unsectarian religion can never prove effective. Even from Mrs Besant we get sound doctrine on this point: "The result of unsectarian teaching is to establish a new form of religion which has nothing in common with historical Christianity or any other form of Christian teaching. By taking away everything to which any one objects, they leave something which is really worthless. The result of unsectarian teaching is a colourless residuum, which, I should think, would be as objectionable to the earnest Christian as it is contemptible to the earnest unbeliever." Certainly, a Christianity which is doubtful about the Incarnation, which is silent about the Divinity of Christ, and which lays no stress on the Sacraments of the Church, is far removed from the religion which has made Christendom. It is true, the modern world revolts against both dogma and

sacraments. The doctrines are called in question, and are therefore doubtful. The sacraments are mysterious, and therefore unreal. And neither are necessary, because the essential thing in Christianity is conduct. But the Christian Church must always reply, that doctrines may be questioned, and yet prove true; that mystery attends all life, and is no mark of unreality; and that all experience goes to show that both dogma and sacraments are essential for the highest Christian conduct. The victory over the forces of sin and selfishness can only be won by a firm faith in the tremendous fact that it was the Son of God who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was made man; and by the constant flow into human hearts of the divine life, and strength, and forgiveness that come through sacramental channels.

VIII

MORALITY IN BUSINESS[1]

THERE are some words used long ago by Erasmus which may serve to introduce this paper. "Merchants," he says, "are among the falsest and basest of mankind. They carry on the most despicable of industries. Liars, perjurers, and thieves, they occupy themselves in duping other people."

Now these few sentences seem to prove two things:

First, that mercantile fraud is no new thing. Secondly, that the habit of exaggeration when speaking of mercantile fraud is no new thing.

We may take it for granted that wherever commerce has flourished, dishonesty and tricks of trade have also been abundant.

Dr Cunningham, one of our leading economic historians, states deliberately that he believes there never was a time at which commerce was not attended

[1] Paper read at Church Congress at Hobart, 1894.

by the same evils which exist to-day. But that is only another way of saying that the commercial morality of the nineteenth century is not lower than it used to be in preceding centuries. And if you avoid one-sided and exaggerated statements, you will find little evidence of the deterioration of mercantile honesty. Fraud may be on a larger scale, it may be more skilful than it used to be, but it does not seem to be more approved by public opinion, or to be relatively more common.

Besides, if the standard of commercial honesty were steadily deteriorating, as many eloquent writers assert, how can you reconcile this with the admitted moral influence of trade and business?

You will remember how Lecky deals with this in his *History of European Morals*. Speaking of that accuracy of statement and fidelity to engagements which we mean by truthfulness, he says: "This form of veracity is usually the special virtue of an industrial nation; for although industrial enterprise affords great temptation to deception, yet mutual confidence, and therefore strict truthfulness, are in these occupations so transcendently important, that they acquire in the minds of men a value they had never before possessed. We accordingly find

that even where the impositions of trade are very numerous, the supreme excellence of veracity is cordially admitted in theory, and it is one of the first virtues that every man aspiring to moral excellence endeavours to cultivate."

And then he goes on to point out, through instance after instance, that the virtue of truthfulness is seldom found in nations that have little interest in trade or commerce.

If this is so, if its actual effect is to develop truthfulness, it is hard to believe that commerce is essentially immoral, or that its character is steadily growing worse.

But even if we admit that it has been so from the beginning, even if we dismiss all exaggeration, the world of business presents a melancholy spectacle. Even the lake of pitch of which Dante wrote, overflowing its banks and defiling what it touches, hardly seems too harsh a figure. Think of a few of its more familiar elements: Lying advertisements; the dishonest and, worse than dishonest, the murderous system of adulteration; fraudulent insolvencies, swindling schemes and bubble companies; false invoices, false balance-sheets; bribery; forged trade-marks, the tricks of retail trade, and so on; to say nothing of the

reckless grasping selfishness which is said to pervade and morally ruin all business.

And then think of the results of this mass of iniquity. On the one side the innocent sufferers, the credulous betrayed, the widow and the orphan robbed, the old age, even of the honest and the thrifty, embittered by undeserved poverty.

It is a miserable sight.

But on the other side, the still more miserable sight of the effects upon the guilty: the wreck of character, the shrivelling of all that is noble and generous, the gradual dying of the soul.

Without doubt, commerce and trade have their tragic side.

But, rather, turn to the causes which lead to this state of things. Of course, at the root of all commercial immorality there is the sin of covetousness, that craving for material wealth which implies that a man's life consists in what he possesses.

This we may regard as a permanent cause. But besides this, each generation has its special causes, its special temptations, which determine the form and intensity of its various sins; and of the special causes at work at the present day, I may speak of three:

First, the ever-increasing severity of competition.

We have just heard a hopeful account of the tendencies and prospects of co-operation; but whatever we may expect in the future, just now, owing to a world-wide and apparently increasing depression, the struggle for existence is harder than ever, and that means that the temptation to dishonesty is growing stronger.

The second special cause is the growth of the credit system.

Now, the ultimate effect of the credit system must be to develop honesty. It implies trustworthiness. In a nation of liars and thieves it would be impossible. Credit is in the last instance based upon character, and it can only be permanent where character is sound.

But the immediate effect of the credit system seems to be in favour of fraud. Take an instance. A new man starts in some line of business, and finds the trade almost monopolised by established firms. He has little capital, and so cannot hope to compete successfully. But he can get credit. He borrows a large sum by means of bills and begins business.

But now comes the danger. His forefathers were content to wait. He cannot afford to wait. He must pay his interest on borrowed money. He must meet

his bills when they mature; and so he must get business at any cost, too often at the cost of character.

As Bagehot said a few years ago: "When we scrutinise the reason of the impaired reputation of English goods, we find it is the fault of new men, with little money of their own, created by bank discounts. These men want business at once, and they produce an inferior article in order to get it."

The third special cause of the commercial dishonesty of the present day is the growth of the joint-stock company, or syndicate. As everyone knows, this is one of the features of the trade of our times, but it might seem at first sight as though it would have no influence either for or against honesty.

The fact is, it tends towards dishonesty because it weakens the sense of personal responsibility.

We are told that the individual withers, that the power of the individual is daily growing weaker in comparison with the body of which he is a member; but whether this is true or not, he is gradually losing the sense of his own power, and unfortunately it is in the decision of moral questions that this loss is felt first. A syndicate or board of directors will often perpetrate acts of cruelty or dishonesty from which

the individual members would have shrunk. But, as members of a body, they are content to acquiesce. To take a recent illustration. One of the conspicuous features of the Victorian land boom and of the scandals connected with it was the fact that many well-meaning and respectable men, sometimes through ignorance, but more generally through a weak sense of personal responsibility, allowed themselves to join in transactions which their own instincts must have condemned as dishonest. As I say, their instincts must have condemned the transactions. But a man does not always care to discuss his instincts before a committee. They are sufficient guide for himself, but they are sometimes difficult to justify in public, and so the temptation comes to obey an imperfect reason rather than an unreasoned instinct.

Undoubtedly, management by boards or syndicates tends towards a lower form of business morality. And to make matters worse, these boards of directors have to face annually a body of shareholders clamouring for dividends. The shareholders acknowledge no responsibility as to the management of the business. They will not inquire too curiously into the morality of its transactions, provided the dividend is large. And the unfortunate director, harassed by

greedy shareholders, surrounded by colleagues to whom he finds it difficult to explain conscientious scruples, decides that, as he is only one of many, he will suppress his scruples and follow the majority.

These, then, are three special causes which tend to commercial immorality at the present day: First, the ever-increasing severity of competition; secondly, the development of the credit system; thirdly, the growth of the system of syndicates. These are special causes, but behind them all lies the permanent cause—the sin of covetousness.

Now, what can the Church do to improve the morality of modern trade and business? Up to a certain point the duty of the Church is obvious. She may be able to do something to reduce the strain of competition. No doubt competition is a law of Nature. But, as even Huxley had to remind us recently, no civilised community can afford to allow free play to such laws. The test of its civilisation, and surely much more of its Christianity, is the vigour with which it controls this stern and savage law of Nature by means of the higher law of sympathy. And in this direction the Church may do much by aiding and developing the various forms of voluntary co-operation.

Then, again, the Church may do much in the way of deepening the sense of personal responsibility. The more the claims of society are pressed, the more we must teach that the individual is responsible for his own decisions. He may follow the multitude to do evil, but he will be judged separately. We must warn men against the error which was exposed two thousand years ago: "Say not thou, I will hide myself from the Lord. . . . I shall not be remembered among so many people; for what is my soul among such an infinite number of creatures?"

But, most important of all, the moral law must be clearly taught. "Thou shalt not covet," and "Thou shalt not steal," must always be the message of the Church of God to the man of business. And perhaps we need sterner teaching than is the custom. A merchant said recently: "If the Lord would only let a Christian tell a lie in business, it would be a great advantage sometimes." No doubt it would; and we are met by the other pleas of strong temptation and vicious custom, and ruin seeming to follow honesty. "We must live," is the cry; but the Church does not see the necessity, if life means dishonesty.

"Better die than lie," if the choice must be made.

And this, at least, ought to be clearly understood—

that whatever excuse may be made for the man who steals on a small scale to preserve his life, there is absolutely no excuse for the man who steals on a large scale in order to gratify his covetousness. Of all thieves, let us teach that the would-be-millionaire thief is the most despicable.

So far, as I said, the duty of the Church is obvious: to teach elementary morality more clearly and more emphatically than ever. But she has also a special duty to discharge to this age, and a duty which she has not yet attempted to perform.

There is a very difficult class of problems as regards commercial morality which have not yet been solved, and yet which must in some way be grappled with. The principles of morality are generally obvious, but it is not always easy to apply them to particular cases; and especially is this the case in commerce, with its far-reaching interests and complex relationships. We find many questions of conduct where the Christian duty is not at all clear. For instance, the ethics of investment is at present a somewhat obscure subject. How far is an investor responsible for the use made of his money? What rate of interest, if any, is he morally justified in receiving?

Or, as regards insolvency: How far can a legal

insolvency absolve from a moral obligation to pay one's debts? Or, as regards the credit system: How far is a man morally justified in taking great risks with other people's money?

Or, again, take the payment of wages: How is an employer to decide what is a fair wage to pay his workmen? If he decides according to the market price, where is the dividing line to be drawn between a fair payment and sweating?

There are hundreds of problems like these questions of great practical importance, and yet involving very difficult questions of morals. Public opinion on these points is chaotic; men are asking for guidance, and none is available.

Now, surely guidance on these points must come through the Church if she is to maintain her place as the moral teacher of the world. I don't mean necessarily from the clergy, for the clergy as a body are not the best judges of commercial morality. The conscience of a Christian merchant, knowing all the facts of the case, knowing all the customs of trade, and even exposed himself to the strain of temptation —the conscience of a Christian merchant is a far safer guide than the unpractical knowledge of the average cleric. But whether it comes from the clergy or

the laity, one of the crying wants of the day is the fearless application of Christian morality to these difficult problems.

Let me, then, make a practical suggestion, and that is to establish in these Colonies a branch of the Christian Social Union. In England this association is doing good work. Its decisions may not always be wise or its methods the best, but it at least does this: it impresses upon men social duty and the social power of duty. It reminds them that social problems must ultimately be solved upon Christian principles. And by patient inquiry and by public discussion, it strives to find how those principles which are fundamental and eternal may be best applied to the ever-changing needs of society.

Why should we not have within the Church here a Christian Social Union—a union, not so much for action, as for investigation and inquiry? Let the Church be quite clear as to what is her duty towards society, let her be quite clear as to the true secondary laws of social morality, before she ventures to teach with authority.

IX

PROPERTY: ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS[1]

We have been lately told that the annual income of the people of Great Britain and Ireland amounts to £1,750,000,000. So far, good. We are also told that one-third of this income goes to a small section of the people, viz. one-thirtieth. That is not so good. It seems an excessive inequality. In the United States we are told that one-tenth of the people own seven-tenths of the whole wealth of the country. A small section of the people seem to have far more than their fair share. Can we wonder that the mass of the people are inclined to criticise a social system which permits and produces such an unfair distribution? Not that inequality in itself is an evil. It is one of the necessary conditions of social progress. But excessive inequality is one of the signs of social decay.

[1] Paper read at the Church Congress at Melbourne, 1907.

But whether we wonder or not, the fact remains that, all the world over, democracies are beginning to ask searching questions and to apply tests to our present system of property. And we must remember that the tests they use are not those suggested by envy or covetousness, but are essentially Christian tests.

The first is that of justice, and surely that is a Christian test. These large fortunes which the few possess, how were they acquired? Some were inherited, and Democracy has not yet made up its mind how to deal with the law of inheritance.

Some fortunes, again, were earned, for they represent work done for society. The income of a great captain of industry may be fairly his, for, by his skill in management, his genius for organisation and economy, he makes far more wealth for the community than the amount he takes as wages. And so every man, whether merchant or professional man or artisan, who does good work by which society benefits, may honestly claim a liberal wage. But not every fortune can satisfy the test of justice. There seems no necessary relation between wealth and work. Most men get too little pay for their work. Some get far too much. Some do not work at all, and yet

they take pay. Society is not just in its payments. The inventor of a useful machine dies poor. The man who steals the patent becomes a millionaire. The capitalist lives at ease upon his interest. The labourer barely lives at all. Work and wages do not correspond. Take such fortunes as those acquired by Carnegie, Jay Gould, Rockefeller. Does any sane man suppose that they have been earned; that those millions are only an equivalent for services rendered? And if they were not earned, they were stolen. Then, again, some fortunes are gained by means which are obviously dishonest. The royal road to wealth has often been by gambling, by sweating, by lying advertisements, by monopolies secured by bribery, by the relentless crushing out of weaker competitors. Some of these methods are legal, but they do not satisfy the test of justice. The fortunes thus gained are a theft from society.

Then Democracy applies a second test, which is also Christian: the test of use. However property may be acquired, it can never be a merely private possession. It is a trust, to be used for the benefit of the community. No doubt there are wealthy men who are wise and honest trustees. Gifts for religious uses, the encouragement of education and literature,

the development of science and art and beauty, the support of sensible forms of charity, or even the investment in useful business enterprises—no one can find fault with these.

But not every fortune can stand the test of use, and it is the misuse of wealth rather than mere inequality which provokes reform. We see on every side the utter waste of property in display which is merely vulgar, in a ceaseless round of amusements which are frivolous or vicious, in extravagance in dress and ornament, or in costly dinners, which fortunately have the merit of shortening life. In this country we have nothing as yet approaching the senseless extravagance of the American smart set, but we cannot say that our wealth is wisely spent.

Some of you may remember De Laveleye's story of the discussion between a financier and an economist. "I maintain for my part," said the financier, "that it is luxury which upholds states." "Yes," replied the economist, "just as the executioner's rope upholds the hanged man." De Laveleye goes on to say: "I agree with the economist. The philosophers of old times and the Fathers of the Church alike condemned luxury in the strongest terms, and they were right in so doing. It is pernicious to the individual

and fatal to society." Undoubtedly this judgment is true. Without considering the effect on the individual, the social results of luxury are obviously bad. You may say it creates a demand for labour. Yes, but the labour is diverted from the more profitable to less profitable uses. And the demand is one which is governed by fashion. But fashion changes rapidly, and the labour which obeys it is as rapidly displaced, and so the modern problem of unemployment is made more acute.

Then, again, it sets up a false standard of life for imitation by the poorer classes. And besides this, we have to remember its effect in fomenting social discontent. The selfish waste of wealth in riotous living is a public display made in the sight of men who are badly paid for the work they do, and always haunted by the fear of being unemployed. The working man reads his daily paper, and sees in one column a statement that there is great distress and serious scarcity of employment, and in the next a report of some millionaire dinner or dance, at which enough money is wasted to keep a hundred starving families in comfort. Can we be surprised if he sometimes sees red? It is the men and women who thus misuse their wealth who are the real enemies of the social order, for it is

their selfish folly which rouses the bitter antagonism between classes which has so often issued in the wild words and wilder work of revolution.

Fortunately, bloodstained revolutions are out of date in democratic countries. The people have a simpler and surer method. They control taxation, and excessive inequalities of wealth can be redressed with far more certainty by a graduated tax than by the "red fool fury of the Seine."

And when we find graduated taxation everywhere a part of the popular programme, it is only the worshippers of the gods of silver and gold who are too dull to read and to interpret the handwriting on the wall.

Those, then, are the two popular tests for wealth: Has it been justly acquired? Is it used as a trust for the social good? And the Church must remember these are Christian tests. It is her duty to impress them without fear or favour on the consciences of the owners of property.

In a recent sermon Bishop Gore said: "We are not in touch with the mass of the labouring people. Is not this because we are the church of the rich rather than of the poor, of capital rather than of labour?" The indictment is too true, and it will

take a long time to atone for past failure. But if the Church of England is the church of the rich, she must do her duty by them, and warn them of their responsibilities, in the name of God.

Now, both as to the earning and spending of wealth, definite and impressive teaching is specially needed to-day.

First, as to the morals of business life. The Church of Christ must never allow men to suppose that there are two permissible standards of ethics; that they may earn their incomes by methods opposed to Christian morality. Such methods may be common, they may even be legal, but the income so earned is tainted. Success may depend on compliance with evil custom, but Christ does not call men to success. He calls them to heroism, even though it means martyrdom, and the reformation of modern methods of making money will certainly need its martyrs. In connection with this, we need more teaching as to the responsibility of shareholders. The man who draws his income from a company is responsible for the methods of that company. If it underpays its servants, if it defrauds the public, if it takes unfair advantage of its rivals, the investor is responsible. He can't transfer his responsibility to manager or

directors. If the business involves injustice, he can protest and he can withdraw; but if he remain, he shares the burden of guilt. Then, as to the use of the money. We need more plain speaking on the sin of extravagance and luxury. No doubt it is hard to know exactly where the line should be drawn. But there is a clear distinction between the useful expenditure which maintains every faculty of mind and body in highest efficiency, and the wasteful expenditure which brings moral and physical slackness; between the liberality which fosters art and beauty and happiness for the many, and the selfish waste which is based on vanity, which ministers to sensuality, and which provides for the few an oversupply of unnecessary enjoyments.

In the face of growing luxury and extravagance, it is the duty of the Church to teach with all her force that the simple life is the one most useful to society and the best foundation for the Christian life.

The test of justice and the test of use, those are the Christian tests adopted by Democracy, and likely to be stringently applied by legislation.

But Christianity cannot be satisfied with these, and applies another test still more searching.

Property may be honestly acquired and wisely

used, and yet the owner may come under Christ's condemnation. To understand this, we must consider the ultimate justification of private property. Why should we be allowed to hold private property at all? To some extent, no doubt, this is a right conferred by law, and one which the law might at any time revoke. But there is a deeper basis for the right. Private property is needed in order that our personality, our true self, may be fully realised and expressed. If a man has nothing of his own, he cannot fully exercise his powers or determine their direction. But a private possession, however small, gives him something outside himself by which he can reveal what is in him; something on which his will can act, and which he can use freely as his character may decide. When a man has a possession, the question is at once asked, "What will he do with it?" and the answer makes and reveals the true man. He may show self-control and foresight, and energy and unselfishness, or he may fail in all these points. But his possession has given him the opportunity of developing these virtues, and his use of opportunity shows what is in him. As someone says, "Property is the material on which man as a moral personality exerts his energies and displays his character." And

so the institution of property is no mere creation of law, as some suppose. It has its roots in human nature, and is meant to be a means of developing human nature. And I may say in passing, that is the reason why all schemes of compulsory communism are doomed to fail. They forget human nature. They lay more stress on the distribution of property than on the cultivation of the man. But the man can't be ignored, after all. It may be possible to hold property in common; but to make a man, he must have something of his own.

We see, then, that the ultimate justification of private property lies in the fact that it gives opportunity to personality and helps to develop character. It is intended to make the man who owns it. But, like all great forces, it is dangerous. Instead of making the man, it may ruin him. The tonic may become a poison, and when used in excess it generally is a poison.

And that accounts for the awfully severe language used by our Lord concerning wealth: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Why? Because the wealth

that should have raised them has dragged them down. "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor." Why? Because his wealth was ruining the man's character. Its influence was too strong for him. His only hope was to escape from the temptation. "Woe unto you that are rich," for their wealth has satisfied them, and killed the craving for the higher life.

And so everywhere. Christ speaks with severity of wealth, not because it is dishonestly acquired, not because it is badly used, but because of its influence on the character of its possessors. It is too heavy a burden for the average man to bear. It is perilous to be wealthy. It may be fatal.

Some years ago Mr Carnegie published his *Gospel of Wealth*. He rightly ridiculed the idea that a man could discharge his obligations to society by legacies. He said much worth saying about the best way for the rich to use their riches. For himself, he preferred the endowment of public libraries. All this is admirable. But when Mr Hugh Price Hughes criticised the book he struck a Christian note: "The true question is not, How shall we use our surplus wealth? but, How much dare we retain?" And with the words of Christ sounding in our ears, "How hardly

shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" certainly for those who are interested in the kingdom it is a very pertinent question.

Democracy cannot use this test. It is left to the Church to apply to the conscience of the owners of property.

"How much dare I retain? I know that my wealth is a temptation. I know that it leads to slackness and self-indulgence, to narrowness of mind and hardness of heart, and deadness of spirit and contentment with the world. I see myriads who have lost their souls through worldly gain. Which am I going to put first—my eternal life or the things that I possess?"

There we touch the root of the matter. We think too much of property. Craving for wealth, respect for wealth, absorption in wealth—these are marks of our Anglo-Saxon civilisation, and they are the marks of the beast. They are a flat denial of a religion which teaches that character is the only permanent possession and that the standard of character is the cross of sacrifice.

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